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The Hero and the Anti-Hero in the Novels of Jane Austen

Raymond J. Jordan
Loyola University Chicago

THE HERO AND THE ANTI-HERO IN THE NOVELS OF JANE AUSTEN

by

Raymond J. Jordan

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LIFE

Raymond J. Jordan was born in Chicago, Illinois, April 18, 1930.

He was graduated from Quigley Preparatory Seminary, Chicago, in June, 1949, and from Loyola University, Chicago, June, 1952, with the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

From 1952 to 1954 the author taught English and Latin at Mendel Catholic High School, Chicago, Illinois. He began his graduate studies at Loyola University, Chicago, in September, 1952.

In October, 1954, the author was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In forty-two years Jane Austen wrote six major novels, her juvenilia, and the unfinished Sanditon. The one hundred thirty-nine years since her death have witnessed the writing of numerous criticisms of the author and her works.[1] In setting out to write still another criticism of a facet of the Austenian novel, the writer is faced with the problem of whether an increase in the quantity of the existing criticism is justified. There would seem to be but two probable justifications for attempting further criticism; either what is to be done has never been done before, or what has been done is insufficient or inaccurate. The criticism must be, to be justified, either something new, or an improvement upon what has been previously written. It is this writer's belief that the problem to be considered here and the manner of approach share somewhat in both of these qualities.

To say that the heroes and the anti-heroes in the novels of Jane Austen have not been considered either separately or as a group would obviously

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1 For a comprehensive survey of the critical writings on Jane Austen see Sister Mary Hester Valentine, Survey of the Critical Writings on Jane Austen, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois, 1942. For a more recent critical bibliography see R.W.Chapman, Jane Austen—A Critical Bibliography, Oxford, 1953.

be false. It is evident that an indispensable part of a criticism of any novel would be a consideration of the role of the hero and, where there is an anti-hero, a consideration of his role. Thus the criticisms of the heroes and the anti-heroes are almost as numerous as the criticisms of the novels. The quality and the nature of these criticisms of the hero and the anti-hero are as varied as the quality and the nature of the criticisms of the novels. Despite the wealth of studies of the separate male characters, the critics' appreciations of Jane Austen's men remain at variance. Mary Lascelles notes a lack of depth or density in our view of Mr. Darcy. She says, "When Darcy leaves Elizabeth's (and our) presence, he has nowhere to go."[2] Mudrick also notes a lack of depth in the portrayal of Darcy's character. He says:

> From Elizabeth's point of view in fact, the process of the interpretation of Darcy's personality from disdain through doubt to admiration is represented with an extraordinarily vivid and convincing thoroughness. Nevertheless, Darcy himself remains unachieved: we recognize his effects upon Elizabeth, without recognizing that he exists independently of them.[3]

In other criticisms we find an almost opposite view in which this lack of depth might be said to be considered a virtue. Elizabeth Bowen writes:

> Returning again and again to Mr. Darcy, one pays Jane Austen the compliment of deciding that there was more to him than she knew. He has that cloudy outline important characters should have . . ..[4]

Somewhat in the same vein Reuben Brower writes:

> What most satisfies a present-day reader in following the central drama is

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2 Mary Lascelles, Jane Austen and Her Art, Oxford, 1939, 197

3 Marvin Mudrick, Jane Austen, Irony as Defense and Discovery, Princeton, 1952, 116

4 Elizabeth Bowen, "Jane Austen: Artist on Ivory," Saturday Review of Literature, August 15, 1936, 4

> Jane Austen's awareness that it is difficult to 'know' any complex person, that knowledge of a man like Darcy is an interpretation and a construction and not a simple absolute . . ..[5]

While there is apparent disagreement in these views, there are also elements which can be reconciled; there is an amount of validity in each view. It will be our purpose later to point out what is the common ground between these criticisms.

When we turn to the general criticisms of Miss Austen's heroes and anti-heroes, we find the greatest need for a consideration or reconsideration. Groups of Jane Austen's males are treated by many critics. Mudrick, among others, notes Jane Austen's inability to handle scoundrels.[6] Mary Lascelles notes a pattern in which the hero is mentor and reward of the heroine, a pattern which is found in some of the novels.[7] These criticisms, while they are certainly worthwhile, do not outline for us the place of the hero and the anti-hero in the novels of Jane Austen.

A recent attempt at an encompassing criticism of Miss Austen's leading men is found in A.H.Wright's work.[8] In a part of his interpretation of the novels, Mr. Wright considers the heroine, the hero, and the villain. In generalizing on the role of the hero and the villain he says:

> Men . . . play a definitely secondary role: it is through her heroines

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5 Reuben A. Brower, "The Controlling Hand: Jane Austen and 'Pride and Prejudice,'" Scrutiny, XIII, 1945, 99-111

6 Mudrick, Irony as Defense and Discovery, 221

7 Lascelles, Jane Austen and Her Art, 66-67

8 A.H.Wright, Jane Austen's Novels, A Study in Structure, London, 1953

> that she gives exposition to the theme. The men (except Fitzwilliam Darcy and perhaps Henry Tilney), by complement and contrast, serve thememati-cally, to deepen and broaden the portrait of the heroines. Furthermore, in each novel there are two important men, the hero and the villain, their respective characters being a comment on one another.[9]

What Wright says is true; however, his appreciation of the hero and the anti-hero's (or villain's) role is oversimplified and fails to point out a very important aspect of their position. To say merely that they serve as a complement or in contrast to the heroines is to assign them a rather passive role. Their role is, on the contrary, a very active one, very vital and essential in the plan of the novels.

To state that the hero and the anti-hero in the novels of Jane Austen fill a subordinate or secondary role is to belabor the obvious. However, in this statement is perhaps found the reason why the importance of the hero and the anti-hero is not recognized. The attention that has been given Jane Austen's heroines has very often over-shadowed the part played by the men in the novels. Wright in stating his reasons for writing his criticism says, "What is required in many instances is a fresh look at the novels whose themes have been too shallowly interpreted."[10] A fresh look at the heroes and the anti-heroes is also required in order that a comprehensive view of these characters in the separate novels, and in the Austenian novel in general, might be achieved, and the importance of their part might be recognized and appreciated. This reconsideration is necessary so that a general view, based on a close analysis of each of the novels, might be obtained.

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9 Ibid., 84

10 Ibid., 30

To outline this active role of the hero and the anti-hero is the central point of this thesis. The writer's purpose is to show that, while the role of the leading male characters may be secondary, it is actively essential to promoting the theme of the novels. The hero and the anti-hero function as instruments which Jane Austen uses to promote her themes. The themes of the novels, usually identified with the heroines, are positively supported by the hero. The anti-hero negates the theme, and in being thwarted in his designs serves to further it. Pride and Prejudice and Persuasion are exceptions to this general view. Darcy and Captain Wentworth have roles which are somewhat parallel to the role of the heroine; each of them has, as does the heroine, to be brought to the realization of some fact of life; each has his views modified.

This thesis, then, is meant to be an analysis of the role of the hero and the anti-hero in the novels of Jane Austen. It is the writer's purpose to determine by an analysis of each of the novels the function of these characters in the separate novels and then, as far as is possible, to determine the function of the Austenian hero and anti-hero, and to outline their general characteristics. The chapters relating to each of the novels are analyses of the problem as set forth in regard to the specific novel. The final chapter is a synthesis of the findings of the preceding analyses.[11]

Much of the earlier criticism of Jane Austen has been sharply divided in its interpretation of the author and her work. Jane Austen has been depicted as the gentle chronicler of rural England of her time. She has also been

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11 Jane Austen's incomplete novel, Sanditon, is not considered in this thesis because it is the writer's belief that, because of its incompleteness, an analysis of it would be of little value to the thesis.

considered the unfeeling satirist of her society and the manners of her contemporaries. In the recent criticism of Jane Austen a division in the ranks of the critics is still noted. It might be said that this criticism is concerned, as much as was the early criticism, with Jane Austen's view of humanity. It has to do with Jane Austen the ironist. Whether Miss Austen, a detached observer, views her fellows and casts her barbs, or, in viewing the foibles of human nature, shows a real interest and feeling for the faults of mankind, is the question.

Two exponents of these conflicting views are Marvin Mudrick[12] and A.H.Wright.[13] Mudrick attributes the detached view to Jane Austen.[14] Wright also sees Jane Austen as an ironic viewer, but he says that Miss Austen is:

> . . . deeply concerned with both aspects of the contradictions she perceives: searching the orchards of human experience she finds the bittersweet fruits of confusing experience and ambiguous essence—and becomes a person of the divided, the ironic, vision.[15]

Mudrick characterizes irony as the "neutral discoverer and explorer of incongruities." Irony ". . . consists in the discrimination between impulse and pretension, between being and seeming, between—in a social setting—man as he is and man as he aspires to be; but of itself it draws no conclusions."[16]

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12 Mudrick, Irony as Defense and Discovery

13 Wright, A Study in Structure

14 Dr. Chapman considers Mudrick's criticism, and other similar criticisms, as "essays in iconoclasm" which seem "to issue from a common view, and that one with which I am so out of sympathy that I do not trust myself to discriminate." (Chapman, A Critical Bibliography, 52)

15 Wright, A Study in Structure, 24, 25

16 Mudrick, Irony as Defense and Discovery, 3

Irony, as Mudrick defines it, was for Jane Austen at first a defense, her natural reaction to the world about her. Later it became for her a discovery; rather than a self-conscious response, it became an approach to humanity, the guiding principle of her novels. Thus Mudrick says:

> Distance — from her subject and from her readers — was Jane Austen's first condition for writing. She would not commit herself. To events, literary or actual, she allowed herself no public response except the socially conventional or ironic; for neither of these endangered her reserve, both put off self-commitment and feeling, both maintained the distance between author and reader, or author and subject; both were primarily defenses. . . . Her temperament chose irony at once. She maintained her distance by diverting herself and her audience with an unengaged laughter, by setting irony, the instrument . . . to sharpen and expose all the incongruities between form and fact, all the delusions intrinsic to conventional art and conventional society.[17]

Irony, as Wright finds it in Miss Austen's novels, adds a greatly increased depth to the author's vision. In speaking of irony, Wright says, "My intention is to apply the term to a world view, as the juxtaposition, in fact, of two mutually incompatible views of life."[18] Rather than merely pointing out incongruities, this ironic view comprehends the incompatibles and educes from them a synthesis — in human behavior, the correct mode of action. Thus in Sense and Sensibility we find the conflict of thesis and antithesis, sensibility as the sole guide to behavior opposed to sense. Neither sense, nor sensibility, followed exclusively can properly govern human action; thus a synthesis of the two, a proper balance of sense and sensibility, provides the correct norm and the theme of the novel.

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17 Ibid., 1

18 Wright, A Study in Structure, 24

Wright says:

> Irony comes as the result of the quest for meaning in the universe, as the result of human experience; it is not a piece of equipment, like an entrenching tool with which man starts out.[19]

The ironist

> . . . is characterized by the recognition of the antithesis in human experience; his is an interested objectivity; he is detached but not indifferent, withdrawn but not removed. He may, as an observer of the human scene, be moved to compassion, disgust, laughter, disdain, sympathy or horror — the whole range of reaction is evidently his. What distinguishes him uniquely is a rare and artistically fruitful combination of complexity, distance, implication.[20]

Lionel Trilling, in speaking of Jane Austen's irony, says that it is primarily "a method of comprehension."

> It perceives the world through an awareness of its contradictions, paradoxes and anomalies. It is by no means detached. It is partisan with a generosity of spirit — it is on the side of life, of affirmation.[21]

A realization of these basic differences in approach to Miss Austen's works is essential to an appreciation of the various criticisms. While all of these critics attribute genius to Jane Austen, this basic difference in approach colors all facets of their interpretations of the Austenian novel.

The criticism that Jane Austen lacked the ability to portray human emotion has been expressed by some critics. Her lack of sympathy, her distance from her subjects, her indifference to the human in man, have been assigned as reasons for this. Thus Lord David Cecil in his criticism says:

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19 Ibid., 26

20 Ibid., 28

21 Lionel Trilling, "Mansfield Park," Partisan Review, XXI, September, 1954, 493

> The nature of her talent imposed a third limitation on her; it made her unable to express impulsive emotion directly. She surveyed her creatures with too detached an irony for her to identify herself with them sufficiently to voice their unthinking gushes of feeling.[22]

Reuben A. Brower considers the irony of Jane Austen in relation to her mind and facility of expression. He says:

> What is distinctive about this mind is its control: the union of alertness to the many possible meanings of a human action with the steadying power of making precisely defined statements of this ambiguity.[23]

Character, plot, setting, theme, style — all can be interpreted and judged differently in light of the basic principle of interpretation. The two positions on irony which we have pointed out make for diversity among Jane Austen's critics.

Somewhere within the diversity of recent criticism, and also among the varying opinions of earlier critics, there would seem to be a middle ground upon which a valid criticism or interpretation of the novels of Miss Austen would rest. While it is not our purpose to sift and sort the critical works and arrive at a universal criticism, the writer believes that a reappraisal of Jane Austen's heroes and anti-heroes is warranted. A synthesis of the separate analyses of the novels will give us a comprehensive view of the role of the Austenian hero and anti-hero, not merely generalizations, but an analytic review which will clearly delineate the function and characteristics of these men.

Jane Austen's novels exhibit a departure from the novel form of her predecessors. This fact was clearly noted in her own time by Sir Walter

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22 David Cecil, "Jane Austen," in Poets and Story-Tellers, New York, 1949, 103

23 Brower, "The Controlling Hand," 103

Scott.[24] Her first novels were a conscious reflection upon the excesses of her predecessors. Sense and Sensibility was a reaction to the sentimental novel; Northanger Abbey satirizes the Gothic romance.[25] Although Miss Austen's works were something new in the field of fiction, we do find traces of the influence of previous novelists. We will mention briefly here three aspects of her novels which give evidence of this influence, principally the influence of Richardson.

The influence of Richardson is noted in the portrayal of the villain in Sense and Sensibility, in the use, in many of the novels, of the convention of actual or attempted seduction as a climax to the action of the novel, and in the pattern of hero as mentor and reward of the heroine. Willoughby, Wright says:

> . . . is a regular villain, a less interesting, because less complete, version of Richardson's Lovelace, whom he resembles in his carefree gaiety, insensitive wit, his propensity to seduction, and in his final, pious repentance.[26]

Similarly Leonie Villard writes:

> Willoughby, the attractive 'blacksheep' . . . is a blurred and softened reproduction of Lovelace, the unscrupulous lover, the libertine and seducer created by Richardson.[27]

Willoughby's seduction of Colonel Brandon's niece, Wickham's attempted

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24 Sir Walter Scott, "Emma," Quarterly Review, October, 1815, reprinted in Famous Reviews, ed., R.B.Johnson, 1914

25 A.J.Peterman, Jane Austen and the Critical Novel of Manners, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois, 1940

26 Wright, A Study in Structure, 94

27 Leonie Villard, Jane Austen, Sa Vie et Son Oeuvre, Lyon, 1915, 243

seduction of Darcy's sister and actual seduction of Lydia, Henry Crawford's luring Maria Bertram from her husband, William Elliot's establishing Mrs. Clay as his mistress, each provides a climax, a turning point in the novel in which it occurs. Real or attempted seduction used to provide a climax was a convention to be found in the novels of Jane Austen's forerunners, a convention which took its origin in the novels of Richardson. In noting this influence Mary Lascelles says:

> . . . for Jane Austen accepts the convention of a climax to the action; that is, of tension first increased, then snapped by some act more violent than any that has proceeded it. And the kind of violent acts that would lend themselves to the novelist's hand and would appear likely in the life of an English country gentlewoman of that day . . . were very few. Unfortunately, Richardson had made it seem that of those few, the violence of actual or attempted seduction might be the most apt and convenient for the novelist's purpose. The influence of this suggestion is seen in all of Jane Austen's novels — except Northanger Abbey . . . but her response to it reveals her development.[28]

Finally, we note the pattern of the hero as mentor and reward of the heroine, a pattern which found its roots in Richardson and was followed in other sentimental novels. Henry Tilney, Edmund Bertram, and Mr. Knightley, all, to a greater or less degree, follow this pattern. Mary Lascelles notes this in her work:

> . . . Sir Charles Grandison, the first hero who could regard himself as both mentor and reward of the heroine, had set a fashion which was followed in A Simple Story, in Evelina and Camilla, and several lesser novels. Jane Austen seems to accept this relationship between hero and heroine; but she develops it afresh, according to her own vision.[29]

In considering recent criticism and the more marked influences on Jane

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28 Lascelles, Jane Austen and Her Art, 92

29 Ibid., 66, 67

Austen's works, we get a partial view of the essential qualities that comprise and govern Miss Austen's novels. We see Jane Austen as an ironist, irony the controlling principle of her work (either the product of a detached or indifferent mind which merely points up the incongruities of human action, or of the sympathetic observer seeking an answer to the human riddle). We also see Jane Austen handling situations in the novels in a conventional manner. However, while conventions from the sentimental novel are found in Jane Austen, the controlling principle which fashions the novels makes Jane Austen's novels different from those of her predecessors. In treating Jane Austen's response to her reading, Mary Lascelles writes:

> Thus it is to an awareness of the world of illusion rather than to an acquaintance with this or that novel, or school of novel writing, that Jane Austen can, and does, appeal through the burlesque element of her work . . . .[30]

Having pointed out the importance of a consideration, or reconsideration, of the role of the hero and the anti-hero, the state of recent criticism, and some evidence of the influence of previous novelists which is found in the Austen novels, let us proceed to the analysis of the role of the hero and the anti-hero in the novels.

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30 Ibid., 55

CHAPTER II

COLONEL BRANDON, EDWARD FERRARS AND WILLOUGHBY

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

> Marianne Dashwood was born to an extraordinary fate. She was born to discover the falsehood of her opinions, and to counteract, by her conduct, her most favorite maxims.[1]

It is necessary in a consideration of the role of the hero and the anti-hero in Sense and Sensibility to be concerned first with the fate of the heroine. We must, both in Sense and Sensibility and others of the Austen novels, approach the males through the females, for the roles of the hero and the anti-hero are very integrally dependent upon that of the heroine. For this reason we must consider the fate of Marianne Dashwood and outline the theme of the novel.

Marianne's fate was no more than to learn by experience that impulsive action, or behavior determined solely by sensibility or feeling, leads to extreme unhappiness, that the ideal is found in moderation. The novel presents the opposing, though not irreconcilable, elements of sense and sensibility. In their extremes these two elements exclude each other, but, and this in essence is the theme of Sense and Sensibility, when modified, or when a proper balance between the two is reached, sense and sensibility are worthy guides of human

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1 Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility, in The Novels of Jane Austen, I, ed., R.W.Chapman, London, 1926, 378

conduct.[2]

The conflicting elements in the novel are actually sensibility, the extreme reliance upon feeling, and sense, a mode of conduct based on moderation. The first of these qualities is represented by Marianne Dashwood, the other by her sister, Elinor.

> Elinor . . . possessed a strength of understanding, and coolness of judgment . . . . She had an excellent heart; her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them: it was a knowledge which her mother had yet to learn, and which her sister had resolved never to be taught.
>
> Marianne's abilities were in many respects quite equal to Elinor's, she was sensible and clever, but eager in everything, her sorrows, her joys could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting; she was everything but prudent.[3]

The contrast between sense and sensibility is carried farther than the heroines; it extends to the supporting characters. As Mary Lascelles says:

> Jane Austen is at pains to bring Marianne's romantic notions into conflict not merely with Elinor's rules of good sense and expediency, but also with Colonel Brandon's sobered sensibility, Edward's mildly humorous anti-romanticism, and Margaret's simplicity.[4]

Thus we have the main characters arranged

> . . . formally grouped as for a dance: Marianne and her mother (supported as they imagine by Willoughby) challenging Elinor; while behind Elinor are

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2 Wright finds the theme to be that sense and sensibility are irreconcilable, that neither is adequate, that "there is no happy medium." His interpretation is based on the fact that Elinor, who, he says, is the "apotheosis of sense," is not always ideally happy. (Wright, A Study in Structure, 30, 92) The error here would seem to lie in Wright's misinterpretation of the "sense" which Elinor portrays, and the "sense" which Jane Austen depicts as desirable. The fact that Elinor is not always happy is not a refutation of "sense," but rather an indication that there are many other factors which govern our lives.

3 Austen, Sense and Sensibility, in The Novels, I, 6

4 Lascelles, Jane Austen and Her Art, 65

ranged . . . Edward and Colonel Brandon . . . .[5]

In turning to the hero and the anti-hero of Sense and Sensibility, we find the instruments which are to determine Marianne's misfortune and subsequent awakening. The anti-hero, the charming Willoughby, represents all that is necessary to lead Marianne to indulge her feeling to the utmost. Contrasted with Willoughby, and in a small way responsible for Marianne's redemption, are Colonel Brandon and Edward Ferrars.

Willoughby is a misleading anti-hero; he misleads not only Marianne, but also, the reader and Elinor. We find that the reader's sympathy for a large part of the novel is with Willoughby. It is nearly the middle of the work when we learn that he is other than a very romantic suitor. The only charge against him (and Marianne), previous to this time, is that their courtship is not carried on strictly according to eighteenth-century conventions. It is only when we learn that Willoughby is to marry someone other than Marianne that he takes on the role of rogue. This role is strengthened by Colonel Brandon's somewhat overdue account of Willoughby's former seduction of the Colonel's ward and his subsequent perfidy.

Even after Willoughby's true nature is uncovered, after he has disillusioned Marianne, he is charming enough to regain momentarily some standing in Elinor's eyes. Very melodramatically Willoughby comes to see Marianne in what is thought to be her last moments of life. He tells Elinor:

> . . . to make you hate me one degree less than you do now, I mean to offer some kind of explanation, some kind of apology, for the past . . . to

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5 Ibid., 158

obtain something like forgiveness from Ma— from your sister.[6]

Evidently Willoughby's eloquent plea was not in vain, for after this discourse we find Elinor giving way to Marianne's failure, sensibility.

> Elinor for some time after he left her, for some time even after the sound of his carriage had died away, remained too much oppressed by a crowd of ideas, widely differing in themselves, but of which sadness was the general result, to think of her sister.
>
> Willoughby . . . in spite of all his faults, excited a degree of commiseration for the sufferings produced by them, which made her think of him as now separated forever from her family with a tenderness, a regret, rather in proportion, as she soon acknowledged within herself, to his wishes than to his merits.[7]

We even find that Elinor " . . . for a moment, wished Willoughby a widower" and then rather as an afterthought:

> . . . then remembering Colonel Brandon, reproved herself, felt that to his suffering and his constancy, far more than to his rival's, the reward of her sister was due, and wished anything than Mrs. Willoughby's death.[8]

It is evidently the author's wish that we condemn Willoughby for what he has done, and even more so, condemn him when he reveals his motives in his apology to Elinor. However, we find ourselves observing Elinor and discovering no absolute condemnation, rather a sort of longing and regret.

If Willoughby is able to so mislead the reader and Elinor, it is not surprising that Marianne is completely taken in by him. We are to be shown in Sense and Sensibility that an extremely sensible nature (in the connotation of eighteenth-century sensibility) is subject to great misfortune, that sensibility as a guide leads to serious misjudgment. Marianne Dashwood possesses this

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6 Austen, Sense and Sensibility, in The Novels, I, 319

7 Ibid., 333

8 Ibid., 335

sensibility in the extreme. The object of her misjudgment is to be a man, a man who through his personal attractiveness will win her affection, mislead her as to his intentions and then leave her to bestow himself on another. Willoughby fulfills this role ideally.

Young, handsome, and rich, Willoughby arrives on the scene to rescue Marianne from a fall and to carry her home. All are immediately struck by his attractiveness.

> Elinor and her mother rose up in amazement at their entrance and while the eyes of both were fixed on him with an evident wonder and a secret admiration which sprung equally from his appearance, he apologized for his intrusion by relating the cause, in a manner so frank and so graceful, that his person, which was uncommonly handsome, received additional charms from his voice and expression.[9]

To Marianne

> . . . His person and air were equal to what her fancy had ever drawn for the hero of a favourite story . . . she soon found out that of all manly dress a shooting jacket was the most becoming.[10]

While Willoughby was qualified to charm Marianne and her family, he also possessed those characteristics which would lead to his later actions. Being young and in possession of wealth, he developed a taste for all the things which wealth could bring. A life of luxury became for him a necessity; his own income soon could not cover his huge expenses.

Thus we have Willoughby. His purpose in the novel is to mislead Marianne. He possesses the physical qualities and the charm to make her fall in love with him. He is also selfish, irresponsible, and worldly enough to fill

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9 Ibid., 42

10 Ibid., 43

the role of seducer. Willoughby is the instrument which the author uses to lead her heroine to the extremes of her sensibility and ultimately to cause her to see her folly.

> The alternatives to Willoughby are the alternatives to feeling. Edward Ferrars and Colonel Brandon represent, in fact, the antidote to feeling, the proposition that the only cure for a passionate heart is to remove it.[11]

Set against Willoughby, if not very actively, at least in contrast, are Colonel Brandon and Edward Ferrars. The Colonel and Edward might be considered twin heroes, as Marianne and Elinor might be considered twin heroines.[12] They are the author's male exponents of sense. Both serve as a contrast to Willoughby; the Colonel also acts in the exposé of Willoughby's character and finally becomes Marianne's reward.

It would seem, after reading Sense and Sensibility, that the author had planned a much more active part for Colonel Brandon. As he appears in the novel, however, he fails to fulfill the role which was meant for him. It is made evident shortly after the meeting of Marianne and Colonel Brandon that he is attracted to her. When the possibility of a match between them is mentioned, Marianne scoffs at the suggestion and thinks it ridiculous. Nevertheless, it is clear from the beginning that the author's intention is ultimately to wed the two, and it would seem, since Colonel Brandon is a man of "sense," and ideal in the author's mind, that it would only be fitting that he should play the role of hero and lead the heroine to her final awakening. However, this plan does not

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11 Mudrick, Irony as Defense and Discovery, 90

12 Wright considers them thus; he says, ". . . Elinor and Marianne are in fact twin heroines . . .." (Wright, A Study in Structure, 86)

materialize. Colonel Brandon does little to claim his appointed place in the novel. His activity extends little beyond observing with a grave air and sighing when Marianne reminds him of a long lost love. His chief functional activity in the novel is to reveal Willoughby's past. This he waits to do until after Marianne's heart has been broken. This is hardly the way of a lover. Yet it is he who is to win the "desensibilized" Marianne.

We have little opportunity to learn the character of Colonel Brandon from his own actions. We hear him speak but seldom, and but twice in a revealing manner. The first of these two incidents is his halting speech in which he begins to tell Elinor of his past and the girl of whom Marianne reminds him. The second is his revelation to Elinor of Willoughby's exploits. Here he tells of his disappointment in love and the cause of his gravity; he shows himself to us as a man of great feeling, but feeling which has been controlled.

Little then, other than that he says or does little, is learned from Colonel Brandon's words or actions. We do not even hear him propose to Marianne. All we are told is that the family schemed to bring the two together frequently and that Marianne finally came to love the Colonel.

> With such a confederacy against her — with a knowledge so intimate of his goodness — with a conviction of his fond attachment to herself, which at last, though long after it was observable to everyone else, burst on her — what could she do.[13]

We must turn to the other characters of the novel to learn more about Colonel Brandon. These descriptions are best expressed by Elinor, in favor of

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13 Austen, Sense and Sensibility, in The Novels, I, 378

the Colonel, and by Willoughby and Marianne, in disfavor of him.[14] In the introductory description of Colonel Brandon we read:

> He was silent and grave. His appearance, however, was not unpleasing, in spite of his being, in the opinion of Marianne and Margaret, an absolute old bachelor, for he was on the wrong side of five and thirty; but though his face was not handsome, his countenance was sensible and his address was particularly gentlemanlike.[15]

Elinor finds that

> In Colonel Brandon alone of all her new acquaintances did Elinor find a person who could in any degree claim the respect of abilities, excite the interests of friendship, or give pleasure as a companion.[16]

It is the opinion of Willoughby, in which Marianne concurs, that the reader would accept as most apt. He says that:

> Brandon is just the kind of man . . . whom everybody speaks well of, and nobody cares about; whom all are delighted to see, and nobody remembers to talk to.[17]

Such then is the principal male character on the side of sense. Silent, grave, intelligent, liked by all, delighted in by none, he is set up in contrast to the impulsive, charming Willoughby. He, the symbol of the man of sense, is destined to be the source of Marianne's happiness. His part in bringing this about consists of his belated revelation of Willoughby's past. His initiative as a lover is supplied by other interested characters who engineer the match.

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14 Marianne's final appreciation of Colonel Brandon, realized after Willoughby's defection, is hardly credible. It appears forced and but a part of the tidy, prudent conclusion of the novel.

15 Austen, Sense and Sensibility, in The Novels, I, 34

16 Ibid., 55

17 Ibid., 50

Our second man of sense is Edward Ferrars. His claim to importance in the novel rests on his being Elinor's choice for husband, and on his vaunted integrity, which contrasts with Willoughby's infidelity. The author's introduction of Edward gives no reason for the reader to become excited about him. We read:

> Edward Ferrars was not recommended to their good opinion by any peculiar graces of person or address. He was not handsome, and his manners required intimacy to make them pleasing. He was too diffident to do justice to himself; but when his natural shyness was overcome, his behaviour gave every indication of an open, affectionate heart. His understanding was good and his education had given it solid improvement.[18]

Nowhere in the novel are we allowed to see Edward when "his natural shyness was overcome." For his good qualities we must depend upon Elinor's word; for his lack of social graces and virtues Marianne testifies. From witnessing Edward in action, in the few glimpses we get of him, we would tend to cast our vote with Marianne.

Edward's chief quality, and main contribution to the plan of the novel, is his integrity. While being educated in the home of a private tutor, he falls in love with the tutor's niece. A secret engagement is contracted. After leaving the tutor's home Edward is able to compare his Lucy with other women, notably Elinor Dashwood, and finds that Lucy is rather silly and uncultured. Edward's love for Lucy dies and is replaced by his love for Elinor. In the meantime the engagement comes to the notice of his mother, who is furious, for she has arranged for him a match with wealth. Mother threatens disinheritance, but Edward remains steadfast. He has bound himself to silly Lucy and

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18 Ibid., 15

will not go back on his promise. Mother's threats are made real. Edward is faced with a life of poverty and dejection. It is only after Lucy runs off with Edward's brother that Edward goes to claim the hand of Elinor. His integrity rewarded, his future life is to be one of happiness. This is the Edward Ferrars who is teamed with Colonel Brandon on the side of sense, who runs second in dullness only to the Colonel.

Marianne Dashwood's fate is to be shown that her extreme sensibility leads to serious misjudgment. The author's instrument in bringing this about is the charming, yet roguish, Willoughby. When Marianne has seen her mistake, she is to find happiness in the person of the dull, spiritless Colonel Brandon. (We are told that the reward of Marianne "restored his mind to animation, and his spirits to cheerfulness."[19])

The romance of Elinor and Edward in the novel parallels that of Marianne and Willoughby, with the integrity of Edward contrasting with the infidelity of Willoughby and the resultant happiness of Edward and Elinor contrasting with the sad culmination of the romance of Willoughby and Marianne.

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19 Ibid., 379

CHAPTER III

DARCY AND WICKHAM — PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

An accurate and complete interpretation of the roles of the hero and the anti-hero of Pride and Prejudice is most important in a consideration of Jane Austen's men. Darcy and Wickham not only fill important roles in Pride and Prejudice, but also are outstanding among the Austenian heroes and anti-heroes. In order to arrive at an accurate interpretation of the roles of these men, we must begin with an outline of the plot and a consideration of the theme of the novel.

Miss Lascelles has this to say of the plot of Pride and Prejudice:

> This pattern is formed by diverging and converging lines, by the movement of two people who are impelled apart until they reach a climax of mutual hostility, and thereafter bend their courses toward mutual understanding and amity.[1]

What are the chief forces which cause the lines to diverge? These forces are Darcy's pride, Elizabeth's prejudice, and Wickham's acquisitiveness.

Though Darcy, upon his first appearance in the novel, makes a favorable impression both as to his physical qualities and monetary worth,[2] these

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1 Lascelles, Jane Austen and Her Art, 160

2 Austen, Pride and Prejudice, in The Novels, II, 10

soon are overshadowed by the belief that he is a proud man.[3] This report is given currency by Elizabeth Bennet, who overhears Darcy refuse the promptings of his friend Bingley to dance with one of the young ladies present, because there wasn't "a woman in the room whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with."[4] This, added to Darcy's evaluation of Elizabeth as being "tolerable" but unable to tempt him, closes Elizabeth's mind to any later reappraisal of Darcy's character and sets the lines to diverging.

If Elizabeth's mind has not been entirely made up as to Darcy's character, it needs only the relation of Wickham's story of Darcy's meanness toward him to make all certain. Wickham, in an attempt to enhance his position in his new neighborhood, scruples not to slander his former benefactor. Elizabeth, her mind having once been closed, accepts the tale as true. The paths of the destined lovers are headed in practically opposite directions.

Darcy, being a man well born, is hardly impressed by Elizabeth's motley assortment of relations. Though he is attracted to her early,[5] it is some time before his passion can overcome the objection posed by her inferior connections.

Thus it is that Elizabeth and Darcy are driven apart. Elizabeth's shutting her mind to any further appraisal of Darcy because of her injured pride, her consequent acceptance of Wickham's story, which was manufactured to further his own interests, and the repugnant thought, for Darcy, of being

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3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., 11, 12

5 Ibid., 27

connected with such inferiors, are the main contributing factors.

What, then, causes the lines to converge? The climax is reached with Darcy's proposal, Elizabeth's refusal, and the resultant letter of explanation from Darcy. Having been apparently permanently separated, Darcy and Elizabeth from this point come closer together. Each reviews his past actions and re-evaluates the character and worth of the other.

Wickham unwittingly does his share to bring Elizabeth and Darcy together. Having run afoul in most of his schemes, he runs off with Elizabeth's sister, Lydia. This not only confirms Elizabeth's belief in his maliciousness, but also affords Darcy an opportunity to aid the Bennet family and endear himself to Elizabeth. He does this by finding the two, paying off the culprit, and persuading him to marry the girl.

In this way, then, Darcy, his pride severely scratched by the refusal of a girl of mean circumstances, and Elizabeth, her judgment set aright by the turn of events, are brought together. Wickham has played a part both in the separation and the union of Elizabeth and Darcy.

In writing of the theme of Pride and Prejudice, Wright says:

> To say that Darcy is proud and Elizabeth prejudiced is to tell but half the story. Pride and prejudice are faults; but they are also the necessary defects of desirable merits: self-respect and intelligence. Moreover, the novel makes clear the fact that Darcy's pride leads to prejudice and Elizabeth's prejudice stems from a pride in her own perceptions. So the ironic theme of the book might be said to center on the dangers of intellectual complexity.[6]

In Pride and Prejudice the hero, as well as the heroine, possesses a fault which must be overcome. However, it is the heroine's weakness upon which our

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6 Wright, A Study in Structure, 106

attention is focused. Darcy's pride is established early in the novel. Elizabeth's prejudice, her hostility toward Darcy, progressively increases until a reversal is reached. Its progression from the moment it is determined at the ball, until doubts of her evaluation of Darcy assail Elizabeth, is seen through Elizabeth's eyes. In order to understand Elizabeth's perception of Darcy's character, it is necessary that we see Darcy through her eyes, that we be shown her reactions to Darcy's actions, his speech, and also, the impression which Wickham's story has on her. This in effect is the story until the turning point in Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship is reached. Our attention is focused on Elizabeth; it is the overcoming of her prejudice in which the reader is principally interested.

The reader is given some direct glimpses into Darcy's thoughts, however. These revelations are concerned with the disclosure of Darcy's increasing attraction to Elizabeth. The author, thus, lays the groundwork for Darcy's proposal. Early in the novel, when Jane Bennet is ill at Netherfield Park, Darcy reacts to Elizabeth as follows:

> Mr. Darcy had at first scarcely allowed her to be pretty; he had looked at her without admiration at the ball; and when they next met, he looked at her only to criticize. But no sooner had he made it clear to himself and his friends that she had hardly a good feature in her face, than he began to find it was rendered uncommonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes. To this discovery succeeded some equally mortifying. Though he had detected with a critical eye more than one failure of perfect symmetry in her form, he was forced to acknowledge her figure to be light and pleasing; and in spite of his asserting that her manners were not those of the fashionable world he was caught by their easy playfulness.[7]

A little later, in reply to some teasing comments of Miss Bingley, Darcy says:

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7 Austen, Pride and Prejudice, in The Novels, II, 23

> Your conjecture is totally wrong, I assure you. My mind was more agreeably engaged. I have been meditating on the very great pleasure which a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow.[8]

To satisfy Miss Bingley he names the young lady, Miss Elizabeth Bennet. After some bantering between Elizabeth and Darcy, we read:

> . . . and Darcy had never been so bewitched by any woman as he was by her. He really believed, that were it not for the inferiority of her connections, he should be in some danger.[9]

And finally, at the close of another conversation, Darcy ". . . began to feel the danger of paying Elizabeth too much attention."[10] In this way Jane Austen establishes Darcy's attraction to Elizabeth early in the novel, and prepares the reader for Darcy's later proposal.

In pointing out the subordinate nature of Darcy's role, we do not mean to minimize his stature. In considering the plot and the theme of Pride and Prejudice, we note a striking parallel of construction and characterization. Darcy and Elizabeth share many of the same qualities. Pride and prejudice can be said to be a fault of both. In answer to Charlotte Lucas's excusing Darcy's pride, Elizabeth says, "That is true, and I could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified mine."[11] Elizabeth finds Miss Bingley as offensive as Darcy finds Elizabeth's relations. The symmetrical structure of the plot, the increasing separation, the violent climax (the proposal scene was certainly

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8 Ibid., 27

9 Ibid., 52

10 Ibid., 58

11 Ibid., 20

emotionally violent), the gradual drawing together of the principals, all contribute to the sense of parallelism in Pride and Prejudice. Elizabeth's prejudice is to be overcome (and her pride, notably her pride in her sense of perception and her filial pride or loyalty.) Darcy's views are modified; he progresses from a physical attraction to Elizabeth to a full appreciation of her qualities, and also from a state of almost regal pride to a true appreciation of self and his fellows. Darcy says to Elizabeth after they are happily together:

> Such I was . . . and such I might still have been but for you . . .. By you I was properly humbled. I came to you without doubt of my reception. You showed me how insufficient were all my pretensions to please a woman worthy of being pleased.[12]

While this parallelism exists in Pride and Prejudice, and in truth, is one of its marks of greatness, there is one factor, point of view, which shapes the novel and makes it Elizabeth's story. The emphasis, despite the parallelism of construction, is on the heroine.

In this consideration of point of view and emphasis is found, perhaps, the answer to the divergent views held in respect to the characterization of Darcy. We have noted in the introductory chapter some of these differences of opinion. Mudrick asks, "But why Darcy alone: why is he, among the major figures in Pride and Prejudice, the only one disturbingly derived and wooden?"[13] Mary Lascelles says, "Most of those critics who generalize about Jane Austen's men have Darcy in mind; that is why a general account of them is usually

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12 Ibid., 369

13 Mudrick, Irony as Defense and Discovery, 117

unfavorable."[14] The "cloudy outline" of Darcy is considered a virtue of the work by Elizabeth Bowen.[15] Wright finds Darcy "intricate and intelligent."[16] The question to be answered, in respect to the delineation of Darcy's character, is whether there is a need for a more complete portrayal, a need for an exposed depth of character. The answer is found in the consideration of point of view. Darcy, until after the proposal, is seen mainly through Elizabeth's eyes, and the picture we receive is a distorted one. Prejudice consists of a judgment made on the basis of no knowledge or partial knowledge; Elizabeth, as a result of one meeting, determines Darcy to be proud. This conviction is strengthened by the equally prejudiced judgments of her acquaintances and Wickham's account of his relations with Darcy. Darcy's original reticence and reserve, and the cleverness of his wit when he does choose to speak, also confirm this opinion. This is certainly a partial portrait of the hero, but for the purposes of the novel up to the reversal, it is sufficient.

Elizabeth's change of heart must also be considered in terms of point of view. Just as in the narration of Elizabeth's growing enmity toward Darcy, in the portrayal of the reversal of this sentiment, we must see the heroine's reactions to Darcy's actions, to what she hears of him, his letter, the account of his part in the Lydia-Wickham affair, their meeting at Pemberly, and the testimony of Darcy's housekeeper. We witness this change in Elizabeth; we are told

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14 Lascelles, Jane Austen and Her Art, 197

15 Bowen, "Jane Austen; Artist on Ivory," 4

16 Wright, A Study in Structure, 118

of the transformation of Darcy's sentiments, first by the accounts of his actions and finally by his own admission. Jane Austen and the reader are primarily interested in the heroine. Thus what is shown of the hero, and what it is necessary to depict, is that which affects the heroine and the manner in which it affects her.

To argue the complexity of Darcy's character from Elizabeth's failure to understand him is to attribute a greater percipience to Elizabeth than is warranted. Elizabeth is certainly clever, charming, witty, attractive and youthful, and as is characteristic of youth, impulsive. Her cleverness and her impulsive nature are more the basis of her prejudice, her inability "to know" Darcy, than any complexity of Darcy's character.

A true appreciation of the characterization of Darcy must, then, be preceded by a correct interpretation of Darcy's role. To stress, or overemphasize, the importance of Darcy's role can lead to unfavorable criticism, the claim that Darcy is underdeveloped. On the other hand, the interpretation that Jane Austen presents a complex character, hazily delineated, because he is difficult "to know", leads to a misconception of the heroine's abilities and the hero's place in the novel.

What, then, is Darcy's role in Pride and Prejudice? Though subordinate to the heroine, he fills a more important place than any other of Jane Austen's heroes. Darcy's role is somewhat parallel to that of the heroine; the problems of each are actually similar, for both are possessed of prejudice begotten of pride. Darcy exists throughout the novel as the principal object of Elizabeth's thoughts, and is thus a factor central to the solution of her problem. Pride and prejudice are qualities of the mind; both are concerned with,

or determined by a certain object. Darcy is the object of Elizabeth's prejudice. The overcoming of this particular prejudice, as of any prejudice, consists of an increase in knowledge of the object, the obtaining of reasonably complete knowledge. Elizabeth's increased knowledge of Darcy results in love. Correspondingly the diminishing of Darcy's prejudice effects the same result. In being the object of Elizabeth's thoughts, Darcy acts as a means for portraying Elizabeth's progression from prejudice, to doubt, to full knowledge. Darcy's own progressive enlightenment serves to give balance and substance to the novel.

Wickham plays a prominent and important role in Pride and Prejudice. He serves as a contrast to the hero. Where Darcy is aloof, Wickham is charming and ingratiating. He makes himself attractive to the ladies and conspires to mislead. While Darcy is generous and compassionate, Wickham is mean and acquisitive. The shallowness of Wickham's character enhances Darcy's manliness and goodness. Wickham is important as a key to the complexities of the plot; he serves in both the separation and the uniting of Elizabeth and Darcy. Elizabeth is misled by Wickham's account of his relations with Darcy. In his seduction of Lydia, Wickham provides the occasion for Darcy's change of heart to be graphically presented. Darcy's principal objection to becoming involved with Elizabeth was not so much Elizabeth herself, but rather her social status, and particularly, the vulgarity of her relations. In Darcy's alleviating the embarrassment of the Bennet family, we are shown that Darcy's love for Elizabeth has overcome those previous objections. Wickham's role, then, is to serve as a contrast to the hero, and to act, first, to separate the hero and the heroine and, secondly, to aid unintentionally in bringing the two together.

CHAPTER IV

HENRY TILNEY AND JOHN THORPE

NORTHANGER ABBEY

Jane Austen in Northanger Abbey trains her sights on the Gothic novel and scores with a clever, amusing burlesque. By placing the real next to the fictitious, she contrasts the two and exhibits the falsity of the latter. She points up the excesses of the Gothic, romantic, and sentimental novels of her predecessors. A.H.Wright says of the novel:

> Like all parodies the book exhibits two sets of values: one is satirized, the other (by implication) is shown to be 'truer'. Here, the illusions of Gothic sentimentality are contrasted to the less flashy but more durable values of good sense; the Gothic world is one of fancy; the world as apprehended by good sense is 'real'.[1]

How is the burlesque, this juxtaposition of the real and the fictitious, accomplished? Miss Austen has written a novel in which the characters are anti-types of the characters of the Gothic novel, or, as in the case of John Thorpe, a reduced or modified version of a Gothic character. The heroine and the hero are clearly, and purposely, not of the Gothic mold. The Gothic chaperone and heroine's confidante find their opposites in Mrs. Allen and Isa-

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1 Wright, A Study in Structure, 95

bella Thorpe.[2] John Thorpe, "a crude Lovelace"[3] is a modified, faded version of the Gothic villain. Catherine's mother, unlike the mother of the Gothic heroine, in contemplating her daughter's journey from home, shows no fears "of the violence of such noblemen and baronets as delight in forcing young ladies away to some remote farmhouse."[4] Mudrick, in outlining the author's method, writes:

> Instead of reproducing the Gothic types of character and situation, she represents their anti-types in the actual world and organizes these into a domestic narrative that parallels or intersects, and at all points is intended to invalidate the Gothic narrative to which it diligently corresponds.[5]

In this way Jane Austen writes a novel simultaneously Gothic and realistic in order to prove the former false and absurd.

In introducing Catherine Morland, Jane Austen writes, "No one who had seen Catherine Morlarad in her infancy would have supposed her born to be an heroine."[6] The author goes on to point out the atypical development of the heroine.[7] Catherine Morland does not approach the stature of heroine, in the Gothic sense, as she becomes older, for she grows up exceedingly normal, lacking

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2 Mudrick, Irony as Defense and Discovery, 47

3 Wright, A Study in Structure, 105

4 Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey, in The Novels of Jane Austen, V, ed., R.W.Chapman, London, 1926, 19

5 Mudrick, Irony as Defense and Discovery, 39

6 Austen, Northanger Abbey, in The Novels, V, 13

7 Miss Lascelles makes a detailed comparison between Catherine Morland and Emeline of Charlotte Smith's Emmeline, The Orphan of the Castle. (Lascelles, Jane Austen and Her Art, 60)

the qualities and accomplishments of the heroine. Catherine's imagination, stimulated by her reading of Mrs. Radcliffe and others, leads her to many excesses of fancy and embarrassing situations, all of which enhance the burlesque.

In keeping with the plan of the novel the hero, Henry Tilney, is an anti-type of the Gothic hero. His very introduction into the novel is indicative of this. Rather than being drawn together by a natural affinity, Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney meet as the result of the very un-Gothic convention of a formal introduction. There is nothing mysterious about Henry. The fact that he is a clergyman, and the details of his family and origin are soon discovered by Mrs. Allen and made known to Catherine. Henry does not fall in love with Catherine at first sight, nor does he at any critical moment save her from a treacherous villain. (He does ultimately save her from what might be considered the villain of the novel, her Gothic illusions.)[8]

While Henry Tilney serves as an opposite of the Gothic hero, his primary function in Northanger Abbey is of much greater importance. Miss Lascelles describes his function in this way:

> And now by a delightful piece of ingenuity, the authoress hands over to the newly arrived hero her own office of interpreter; it is he . . . who will remind Catherine of her duties as heroine, and point the differences between her situation as it should develop under the laws of fiction, and as it is actually developing.[9]

He will also provide

> . . . a noncommital running ironic commentary on the hypocrisy of the social conventions and the incredibility of the literary conventions that

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8 Wright, A Study in Structure, 102

9 Lascelles, Jane Austen and Her Art, 61, 62

parallel them.[10]

Henry Tilney is to be Catherine's chief mentor, "the agent of Catherine's gradual unillusionment."[11] It is he who is to point out to Catherine the differences between the fictitious or illusory world and the real world, and to bring Catherine to the state of sense.

Shortly after Catherine and Henry meet, Henry assumes his role of critic and guide. After dancing and chatting with Catherine awhile:

> . . . he suddenly addressed her with: "I have hitherto been very remiss, madam, in the proper attention of a partner here; I have not yet asked you how long you have been in Bath, whether you were ever here before, whether you have been at the Upper Rooms, the theatre, and the concert, and how you like the place altogether. I have been very negligent; but are you now at leisure to satisfy me in these particulars. If you are I will begin directly."
>
> . . . then forming his features into a set smile, and affectedly softening his voice, he added, with a simpering air, "Have you been long in Bath, madam?"
>
> "About a week sir." . . .
>
> "Really!" . . .
>
> "Why should you be surprised sir?"
>
> "Why indeed?" . . . "but some emotion must appear to be raised by your reply, and surprise is more easily assumed, and not less reasonable than any other . . .."[12]

Henry's commentaries include observations on such divergent subjects as the material of women's clothes, the books which Catherine reads, her use of words, and her relationship with Isabella Thorpe.

Catherine's visit to Northanger Abbey provides the occasion for her greatest flights of fancy. It is Henry who enlightens her and dispels the

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10 Mudrick, Irony as Defense and Discovery, 43

11 Wright, A Study in Structure, 105

12 Austen, Northanger Abbey, in The Novels, V, 25, 26

illusions which her imagination has formed. Having been prepared by her reading, Catherine's imagination is at work during the journey to the Abbey. As she and Henry ride along, Catherine turns the conversation to the Abbey:

> ". . . you must be so fond of the Abbey! After being used to such a home as the Abbey, an ordinary parsonage must be very disagreeable."
> He smiled and said: "You have formed a very favourable idea of the Abbey."
> "To be sure I have. Is not it a fine old place, just like what one reads about?"
> "And are you prepared to encounter all the horrors that a building such as 'what one reads about' may produce? Have you a stout heart? Fit for sliding panels and tapestry?"[13]

Henry goes on to relate the horrors, imaginary horrors, that such a house might produce.

Henry's gentle remonstrance has no effect on Catherine, for it is not long after their arrival at Northanger that she imagines herself finding the testaments of maltreated relatives, sliding panels, and hidden passageways. After these prove embarrassingly false, Catherine, despite her mistakes, allows her imagination to run rampant again. From a few mistaken notions about General Tilney's character and several unrelated minor incidents, she draws the conclusion that Mrs. Tilney, unloved by her husband, either met an unnatural end, or, and even more horrible, was still imprisoned somewhere in the Abbey. Following the promptings of these thoughts, Catherine takes it upon herself to visit the room which Mrs. Tilney had occupied. When retiring from the room, she is unexpectedly met by Henry. In the course of their conversation Catherine, somewhat unnerved, reveals her thoughts. Henry then brings her back to reality by convincing her that people do not act in that way, or at least if they do, their

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13 Ibid., 157, 158

acts do not go undetected "in a country like this where social and literary intercourse are on such a footing, where every man is surrounded by a neighborhood of voluntary spies . . . ."[14]

Catherine's awakening is not complete when her misconceptions about the Abbey and its inhabitants are dispelled, however. She is bewildered by the fickleness of her friend Isabella; and finally, is completely confused by her abrupt unexplained dismissal from the Abbey. While Henry is able to counsel and console Catherine in her distress about Isabella, he is not available to intercede or explain when his father banishes Catherine from his home. Catherine's introduction to the harsh realities of life is complete. Her consolation is provided by Henry's going to her and their subsequent marriage.

Nothing has been said regarding Henry's role as the destined mate for Catherine. If we are to take Henry Tilney seriously as a suitor, it would only be as an anti-type of the Gothic hero. Otherwise it is difficult to find other than a brotherly affection toward Catherine on Henry's part. Their marriage but gathers together the plot. Catherine's love or fondness of Henry is often expressed. However, Miss Tilney fairly well sums up the matter when, in censuring her brother for teasing Catherine about her use of words, she says, "Henry, you are impertinent. Miss Morland, he is treating you exactly like a sister."[15]

Jane Austen did not take this romance seriously, except perhaps for its satirical value. The romance progressed something in this manner. Early

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14 Ibid., 197, 198

15 Ibid., 107

stages:

> But Catherine did not know her own advantages; did not know that a good-looking girl with an affectionate heart, and a very ignorant mind, cannot fail of attracting a clever young man, unless circumstances are particularly untoward.[16]

Later:

> Catherine . . . enjoyed her usual happiness with Henry Tilney, listening with sparkling eyes to everything he said and in finding him irresistible, becoming so herself.[17]

And finally after Henry's proposal:

> . . . though he felt and delighted in all the excellences of her character, and truly loved her society — I must confess that his affection originated in nothing better than gratitude; or, in other words, that a persuasion of her partiality for him had been the only cause of giving her a serious thought . . ..[18]

Henry Tilney is more than functional, however. Jane Austen has drawn him so that he possesses depth and reality that are not found in most of the characters of Northanger Abbey. Henry is witty, lively, talkative, didactic, and sensible. His wit and talkativeness have been previously demonstrated in the discourse between Catherine and himself which took place after they first met. These qualities are shown frequently in their conversation. Henry's good sense is illustrated in his counseling of Catherine when she is disturbed by Isabella's fickleness toward her brother James.[19] In filling his role as commentator on social conventions, Henry Tilney gains the depth and reality which

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16 Ibid., 111

17 Ibid., 131

18 Ibid., 243

19 Ibid., 205-207

set him off characterwise from the others in the novel. In endeavoring to have Henry depict reality, Miss Austen has made him a real, living character.[20]

John Thorpe has a threefold purpose in Northanger Abbey, first, as a contrast to the hero, secondly, as a subdued version of the villain of the Gothic novel, and thirdly, as a factor in forwarding the action of the novel. Wright in assessing John Thorpe's part in Northanger Abbey writes:

> John Thorpe contrasts sharply with Henry Tilney in being gross where the latter is refined, stupid rather than brilliant, boorish rather than elegant; Thorpe appears very little, is dismissed early, and is, altogether, the least interesting of his author's villains . . ..[21]

Although Thorpe may be a weak character, playing a less important part than others of Jane Austen's anti-heroes, his role consists of more than merely furnishing a contrast to Henry Tilney; therefore we must consider the other two aspects of John's role to appreciate fully the anti-hero of Northanger Abbey.

John Thorpe contrasts with the Gothic villain; he is a toned-down, simplified version. While he is not sinister, he is exasperating, vulgar, rude, foolish, importunate, and unscrupulous enough to fill the role of the unwelcome suitor. Jane Austen introduces John in this manner:

> He was a stout young man, of middling height, who with a plain face and ungraceful form, seemed fearful of being too handsome, unless he wore the

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20 Mudrick says of Henry Tilney: "He seems, in fact, the only perceptive person in the book; and he closely resembles, except for a few details of dress and appearance, the author herself." (Mudrick, Irony as Defense and Discovery, 48) This likening of Jane Austen and Henry Tilney brings to mind a parallel situation in Pride and Prejudice. There Elizabeth Bennet seems to speak for the author. Elizabeth says, "Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can . . .." (Austen, Pride and Prejudice, in The Novels, II, 57)

21 Wright, A Study in Structure, 102

> dress of a groom, and too much like a gentleman, unless he were easy where he ought to be civil, and impudent where he might be allowed to be easy.[22]

Catherine Morland, despite her lack of sense, is quick enough to disapprove of John. At first she passively accepts him and his compliments, more out of deference to his sister Isabella than anything else. John's lack of manners, of civility, and his tricks cause Catherine soon to tire of him. He persuades Catherine to go for a drive with him by falsely convincing her that the Tilneys, with whom she was to walk, have gone off without her. Unknown to Catherine he begs that she be excused from keeping an engagement with the Tilneys so that she might be of a party with him, Isabella, and Catherine's brother, James. These acts do little to endear John to Catherine.

While John Thorpe does not forcibly carry the heroine off, or engage in other nefarious deeds, he does manage to do enough mischief. In so doing he affects the whole course of the novel.

After Catherine Morland meets the Tilneys and finds them, especially Henry, very pleasant, their friendship grows quickly. Not only are the young people eager to develop the attachment, but General Tilney is also anxious to encourage it. That his father should wish that Henry and Catherine be matched is a source of no little surprise to Elinor and Henry Tilney. Their father is wont to encourage only connections of wealth and affluence. Catherine, however, finds great joy in the General's favor.

It is not until near the end of the novel that the General's motives are discovered. Catherine visits at Northanger Abbey. After she is there a

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22 Austen, Northanger Abbey, in The Novels, V, 45

few weeks General Tilney dismisses her from his house very rudely and without a stated reason. Henry, when he learns of this, goes to the Morland home to apologize for his father's actions. While there he and Catherine become engaged and the cause of the General's actions is revealed. This revelation also brings to light the role played by John Thorpe.

Upon seeing his son speaking with Catherine at the theatre, General Tilney inquired of John Thorpe who the young lady might be. At this time John fancied himself the suitor and future husband of Catherine. To enhance his own position, John spared nothing in exaggerating Catherine's wealth, family, and influence. The General, quite disposed to match his son with such a fortune, hastened to encourage and further the acquaintance of Henry and Catherine. The next time General Tilney and John Thorpe meet, at the time Catherine is visiting at Northanger, John no longer has reason to exalt Catherine. She has refused his proposal. Isabella Thorpe is no longer to marry James Morland. This time John's powers of exaggeration are employed in disparaging Catherine, her family, fortune, and influence. The General, rather then being angry with himself for being duped, or at John, who misled him, directs his rage toward Catherine and dismisses her from the Abbey.

Thus, though this facet of John Thorpe's role is not apparent throughout the narrative, he does play a material part in forwarding the action of the novel. John in this connection affords an explanation for the actions of General Tilney, and enables the author to wrap up neatly the loose ends of the novel.

In Henry Tilney we have one of Jane Austen's better heroes, and in John Thorpe the least interesting of the anti-heroes. Henry plays a vital role

in the novel as Catherine's guide, who directs her out of the world of illusion to an appreciation of, an awakening to, reality. He is her counselor and finally her reward. As an anti-type of the Gothic hero and as the enlightened spectator, the interpreter of the world of fiction and the manners of men, Henry is most essential to the burlesque.

Crude, boorish, and scheming, John Thorpe contrasts with the suave, intelligent, and considerate Henry. He is resurrected at the end of the novel as the key to the mystifying actions of General Tilney. As a restricted version of the Gothic villain, he takes his place with the other anti-Gothic characters of the novel.

CHAPTER V

EDMUND BERTRAM AND HENRY CRAWFORD

MANSFIELD PARK

In Mansfield Park the area of major concern changes from the personal level of the previous novels to the social or environmental level.[1] The difficulties of Marianne Dashwood, Elizabeth Bennet, and Catherine Morland stemmed principally from certain facets of their personalities. Marianne's impulsive, emotional response to the world about her, Elizabeth's pride and prejudices, and Catherine's imagination gave rise to the complexities of the novels. The personality of each of these heroines had to be modified in order for her to realize happiness. In Mansfield Park, however, we have a heroine, Fanny Price, whose personality needs no modification, who is the personification of righteousness, and whose office it is to present the author's thesis of morality.[2] Fanny must make a choice from among three sets of values, the values of three

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1 In commenting on Jane Austen's remark that her subject would be ordination, Dr. Chapman says that he would rather say the subject is "Environment." In commenting on the theme of the novel he says, "The ostensible moral of the book, which is almost blatantly didactic, is that education, religious and moral, is omnipotent over character." (R.W.Chapman, Jane Austen Facts and Problems, Oxford, 1948, 194)

2 Lionel Trilling, in speaking of Fanny Price's virtue, says, "The shade of Pamela hovers over her career." (Lionel Trilling, "Mansfield Park," Partisan Review, XXI, 1954, 497)

separate societies. Her predetermined and inevitable acceptance marks Fanny's, and her author's, approval of one of these sets of values.

In the novel the moral environment of the urbane and sophisticated social circles of London, of genteel and conventional Mansfield Park, and proletarian Portsmouth are contrasted.[3] Each of these has its representative: London, the Crawfords; Mansfield Park, the Bertrams; and Portsmouth, the Price family. The three are brought into contact and contrast by the heroine. The purpose of the novel is to show the genteel conventionality of Mansfield Park to be superior.[4]

Adherence to a strict code of respectability is the standard of the Mansfield Park ethics. Restraint of emotions and pleasures, patronizing benevolence toward the unfortunate, rigid respect for authority, concern for and an appreciation of wealth, influence and rank, are the principles which make up the code.[5] Sir Thomas Bertram, his son Edmund, and Fanny Price embody the spirit of Mansfield Park. Sir Thomas, a sort of patriarch, is the source and continuing force of this spirit. Edmund is the only one of the Bertram family, other than his father, who embraces this code of values. Fanny comes under the influence of Sir Thomas, is nurtured in the tradition by Edmund, and finally,

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3 While the contrast between London and Mansfield Park is obvious, Portsmouth also is contrasted. Trilling writes, "Mansfield stands not only against London but also what is implied by Portsmouth on Fanny's visit there." (Ibid., 506)

4 Mudrick, Irony as Defense and Discovery, 155

5 Trilling, writing of the spirit of Mansfield Park, says, ". . . Its impulse is not to forgive but to condemn. Its praise is not for social freedom but for social stasis." (Trilling, "Mansfield Park," Partisan Review, 493)

rejecting the values of her childhood home and those of the London group, casts her lot with the values of Mansfield Park.

If the moral values of Mansfield Park are superior, and if the author's argument is to be convincing, it would seem that the others of the Bertram household should live by these principles. On the contrary, however, they are either indifferent or hostile to the code of Sir Thomas. They serve as an object lesson which points out the consequences of non-conformity. Lady Bertram enjoys a vegetable existence in which her only concern is her own comfort. She languishes in a state of indifference, content neither to promote nor to oppose. Her marriage to Sir Thomas has evidently saved her from the fate of her sister, Mrs. Price. Blessed with all the comforts which Sir Thomas' wealth provides, and "guided in everything important by Sir Thomas and in smaller concerns by her sister,"[6] Lady Bertram leads a useless, but harmless, respectable life. While Lady Bertram is indolent, her sister, Mrs. Norris, is ambitious. She has an insatiable passion for directing and dictating. Her allegiance to Sir Thomas is limited by her indulgence of her own desires and the whims of her favorites. Her destiny is to be a villain of the piece rather than a champion of Sir Thomas' cause, for to her pampering of Maria is laid a portion of the blame for Maria's downfall. The doting aunt follows Maria into exile to give comfort and companionship to her fallen niece.

Of the three Bertram children who managed to be unaffected by their father's influence, Julia and Tom amend their lives before irreparable harm can

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6 Jane Austen, Mansfield Park, in The Novels of Jane Austen, III, ed., R.W.Chapman, London, 1926, 20

come to them. Tom, a thoughtless pleasure-seeker, is sobered by a grave illness and the conduct of his sister, Maria. When Julia hears of Maria's defection, fearing her father's wrath, she elopes with the bounder, Yates. Reflection on the disadvantages of her position soon causes Julia to make her way with her husband to her father's house to seek his blessing. Maria Bertram does not enjoy the advantages of redemption. Her affair with Henry Crawford brings lasting disgrace on her family and sends her to irrevocable exile. Her disregard for the Bertram code leads to her shame and degradation; her sin and its consequences make the results of non-conformity strikingly apparent.

The principal conflict of Mansfield Park, and the chief means of presenting the theme of the novel, is the Crawfords' attempted, but abortive, assault upon the Bertram fortress of respectability. Our analysis of the roles of the hero and the anti-hero is in large part a consideration of this conflict. Prior to this consideration, however, we should note another very important difference between Mansfield Park and the previous novels of Jane Austen.

In Mansfield Park we fail to find the characteristic irony of Jane Austen; we find instead a novel which is didactic and moralistic.[7] Rather than the organic interplay of contraries, the exhibition of incongruities, and a progressive series of advances and reversals leading to a probable end, we are treated to a plodding, inexorable movement to a predestined, unrealistic con-

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7 Trilling notes this absence of irony; he writes, "But there is one novel of Jane Austen, Mansfield Park, in which the characteristic irony seems not to be at work. Indeed, one might say of this novel that it undertakes to discredit irony and to affirm literalness, that it demonstrates that there are no two ways about anything." (Trilling, "Mansfield Park," Partisan Review, 492)

clusion. The aim of the novel is the acceptance of the Mansfield Park code, an acceptance which the heroine, and supposedly the reader, is to make. That the author's approval and the heroine's approval rests with the Bertrams is a foregone conclusion. The reader is never allowed to forget whom he should approve and disapprove, for Fanny is ever present sitting in solemn judgment on all she surveys. Fanny is virtuous; what she frowns upon is bad; what she accepts is good. Fanny is quick to detect and disapprove of Mary Crawford's levity, her disrespect for authority in the form of the clergy, Henry's trifling, the Bertrams' theatricals, Maria's flirtation, and finally the vulgarity of her own family which she discovers during her visit at Portsmouth. Fanny is the constant judge of the morality and manners of all around her; her frowns and tremblings spell disapproval. Finally, apparently to seal the author's argument and to make up for the reader's lack of sympathy for Fanny (the reader should be sympathetic toward Fanny if her views are to be accepted), Jane Austen gives us our last glimpse of Mary Crawford, the temptress, seductively leering after Edmund, and pictures Henry wallowing in degradation. Probability and consistency are sacrificed in order that the desired end might be obtained. Relentlessly and ineffectively, the reader is reminded of what the author wishes him to accept.

What is the hero and the anti-hero's place in the pattern of Mansfield Park? The hero, Edmund Bertram, stands with the forces of Mansfield Park representing the side of light. Henry Crawford, the anti-hero, stands opposite Edmund on the side of darkness, as one of those educated in the fashionable circles of London.

Edmund's role is twofold. He represents the moral values of the

Mansfield Park group, the standard of conduct which governs the lives of himself, his father, and Fanny Price. Edmund acts as the friend, protector, mentor, and finally the reward of the heroine.[8]

At the age of nine, Fanny Price came from a home where there was a "superfluity of children,"[9] little wealth, no manners, and less education, to Mansfield Park, the home of her uncle, Sir Thomas Bertram. It is needless to say that this shy little girl would suffer alongside her cousins, whose advantages were proportionate to her disadvantages, whose lives were spent in being "finished" in the fashion of their state in life. It is only natural too, that one among these relatives should understand the girl's plight, pity her, and try to comfort her.

It is not long after Fanny's arrival that Edmund Bertram takes up his office as protector and mentor.[10] He discerns Fanny's reasons for being sad, comforts her, opens the world of literature to her, assists in the improvement of her mind, and in the extension of its pleasures. Soon Edmund becomes very dear to Fanny; he becomes her guide and confidante. Although Fanny is innately

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8 Mary Lascelles, in writing of Edmund Bertram's role in Mansfield Park and his relationship with Fanny Price, notes the similarity between it and the hero-heroine relationship found in Richardson's novel and others of the sentimental novels. She says, "And so I think it was with this situation which by Jane Austen's day, had become an acanthus pattern in Sentimental fiction: Sir Charles Grandison, the first hero of a novel who could regard himself as both mentor and reward of the heroine, has set a fashion . . .. Jane Austen seems to accept this relationship between hero and heroine; but she develops it afresh, according to her own vision." (Lascelles, Jane Austen and Her Art, 66, 67)

9 Austen, Mansfield Park, in The Novels, III, 5

10 Ibid., 15

endowed with the virtues that fit her for her role, it is Edmund who educates her from the point of view of the world and thus fits her for her place at Mansfield Park.

Edmund's role goes beyond his aiding the author in the fashioning of the heroine. Shortly after the entrance of the Crawfords, Edmund finds himself attracted to and quickly falling in love with Mary Crawford.[11] Mary is lively, agreeable, pretty, witty, and generally attractive. Her gaiety contrasts well with Edmund's sobriety; it is natural that he should be attracted to her.[12] In the relationship of Mary and Edmund, Jane Austen creates the first contrast between the moral values of London and Mansfield Park. Edmund and Mary differ in character. Edmund is serious; Mary frivolous; Edmund is dull; Mary is witty.[13] They differ in principles, or in the possession of them by the one, and a want of them in the other. Mary is guided by advantage in her actions. The prospect of marrying Edmund becomes brighter and much more to be desired when his older brother is on the threshold of death.[14] Edmund is guided by principle, a sense of what is right. He remains steadfast in his intention of becoming a

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11 Ibid., 64, 65

12 In his appreciation of Edmund Bertram, Mudrick says, "His conversation and conduct are predictably rhetorical and dull. As a hero he might have made an adequate foil to a sparkling heroine — someone say, like Mary Crawford." (Mudrick, Irony as Defense and Discovery, 168)

13 In appraisal of himself Edmund says, ". . . there is not the least wit in my nature. I am very matter-of-fact, plain-spoken, and may blunder on the borders of a repartee for half-an-hour without striking it out." (Austen, Mansfield Park, in The Novels, III, 94)

14 Ibid., 434

clergyman devoted to his parish even though a change in his plans would be of great value in his quest for Mary's love. These differences enhance their relationship, however, until the final crisis, when the downfall of the London ethics is brought about. When Mary can find nothing wrong in the love affair engaged in by her brother and Edmund's married sister, other than the fact that they were found out, Edmund is finally, though reluctantly, forced to give Mary up. Thus the way is clear for Edmund to discover that he has long commanded the affection of the girl, Fanny, who could give him all he had hoped from Mary Crawford.[15] The foremost exponents of right are fused and the author's cause is triumphant.

Henry Crawford is the male counterpart of his sister Mary. He is to attempt to assail the moral fortress of Mansfield Park. Henry possesses all the characteristics of his sister, plus all the manly qualities necessary to make him pleasing to the women and welcome in the society of men. While success for the Crawford-London standard would have Edmund marry Mary Crawford, Henry Crawford must do his part by winning the heart of Fanny Price.

From his first appearance Henry Crawford is styled a flirt and trifler.[16] He has been brought up in the home of an uncle whose philosophy of life revolves about the satisfaction of all human appetites and desires. The first object of Henry's attentions is the Misses Bertram.[17] He succeeds in creating

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15 Ibid., 470

16 Ibid., 42, 43

17 Ibid., 45

in each a strong desire for him, in stirring up a vicious spirit of jealousy between the sisters, and in making the elder Miss Bertram disgruntled in her coming marriage. After Henry is sufficiently successful, he leaves off the pursuit. It might be noted that while Henry's trifling might not be taken seriously by most, it was most indiscreet and worthy of the severest censure in the eyes of Fanny Price.

Little did Fanny dream that she was to be next in line for Henry's attentions. The Misses Bertram being away from Mansfield Park, Henry Crawford found need of a new source of amusement. Thus he says to his sister, "And how do you think I mean to amuse myself Mary, on the days that I do not hunt? . . . my plan is to make Fanny Price in love with me."[18] Henry is not quite as successful in this quest, however, for Fanny's head is not as easily turned as were her cousins'.

This flirtation takes on greater proportions, for Henry soon has a new appreciation of Fanny Price.[19] His attraction to Fanny becomes so real that he soon tells his sister that he is "quite determined to marry Fanny Price."[20] Fanny Price, however, refuses Crawford's proposal. Despite her uncle's promptings, and even Edward's approval of the match, she remains steadfast. Her only concession is to continue seeing Henry as previously in the hope that her feelings toward him might change.

From this point until the final crisis of the novel Jane Austen

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18 Ibid., 229

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., 291

blunders in her portrayal of Henry Crawford. Henry is to be the rogue, the undoer of women, the instrument to prove the validity of the author's thesis. However, Jane Austen misleads the reader, almost for that matter, misleads Fanny Price. Henry has been branded a trifler, as being insincere. Any observer would watch his courtship of Fanny Price with distrust. However, it is possible for first impressions to be erroneous, and it is possible for a man to reform. Thus after Henry perseveres in his suit (he would be unlikely to pursue very long in the face of Fanny's very formidable opposition if he were insincere) and continually reveals likeable qualities, our appraisal of his character changes. Henry begins to reveal himself as capable of being steady; he shows an interest in things of refinement.[21] He exhibits fairness and solicitude for his tenants in the management of his estate.[22] His tact and kindness are shown during his visit with the Prices in Portsmouth.[23] Thus is Henry's good nature presented.

We find Fanny, in considering her sister's plight at home, almost wishfully thinking of an arrangement whereby she as Mrs. Crawford could provide a home for her sister, Susan.[24] Fanny Price is almost convinced, the reader is almost convinced; however, the design of the novel will not allow such to continue. It is not long until word is received that Henry has taken Maria Rushworth (nee Bertram) from her husband's house and is living with her in hid-

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21 Ibid., 336-343

22 Ibid., 404

23 Ibid., 399-407

24 Ibid., 419

ing.[25]

Despite what we are led to believe of him, Henry Crawford is destined to play the rogue. The author says in commenting on his fall, "Henry Crawford, ruined by an early independence and bad domestic example, indulged in the freaks of a cold blooded vanity a little too long."[26] Want of breeding, good breeding, as illustrated by Fanny and Edmund, is the basis of the evils found in Henry Crawford. In the fall of Henry and his sister is found the condemnation of the antithesis of the theme of Mansfield Park.

Although Jane Austen would have us condemn Henry Crawford, the reader cannot help disregarding the inconsistent end to which he is brought and feel definite sympathy for him. Despite the final treatment which he receives at his author's hands, Henry Crawford stands out above all of Jane Austen's anti-heroes. He attains a greater degree of reality and substance than Willoughby and Frank Churchill; he is much more fully developed than Wickham or William Elliot. His vivacity, cleverness, cheerfulness, not only sharply contrast with Edmund Bertram, but are a refreshing relief from the dull company of Edmund and Fanny.

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25 David Cecil, in commenting on Jane Austen's treatment of Henry Crawford, writes, "In Mansfield Park she sacrifices form to fact. The original design of the book obviously intended Henry Crawford to fill the role of villain. But, as she works, Jane Austen's creative power gets out of control, Henry Crawford comes to life as a sympathetic character; and under the pressure of his personality the plot takes a turn, of which the only logical conclusion is his marriage with the heroine, Fanny. Jane Austen was not to be put upon by her creatures in this way. In the last three chapters she violently wrenches the story back into its original course; but only at the cost of making Henry act in a manner wholly inconsistent with the rest of his character." (Cecil, "Jane Austen," in Poets and Story-Tellers, 107)

26 Austen, Mansfield Park, in The Novels, III, 467

Edmund Bertram is saved by the good "domestic example" of a staid, stodgy, serious father, and is the reward of his cousin, righteousness and principle incarnate, for whom he has been mentor and protector. Fanny came from Portsmouth, goodness in the rough, to be developed and shaped by her cousin. Edmund, having been fashioned for good, despite the attractions of Mary Crawford, persists in the ways of virtue and upholds the theme of the novel.

CHAPTER VI

MR. KNIGHTLEY AND FRANK CHURCHILL

EMMA

Emma, like Pride and Prejudice, is a novel of self-deception; Emma Woodhouse's problem is to undeceive herself, or to be undeceived. There is, however, a basic difference between Emma and Elizabeth Bennet. Emma's delusion is that of the adolescent who must be guided by the counsel of a trusted elder, or awakened by experience; at the root of Elizabeth's difficulties are her own exceptional powers of perception and judgment. Elizabeth is truly clever as is frequently demonstrated in the novel. Her insight, her appreciation of people, is often strikingly apt. Emma, on the other hand, is only superficially clever; her accomplishments are those of the tutored gentlewoman, and at best are underdeveloped. Her quickness of wit serves only to disparage and to wound. Elizabeth was clever; Emma thought that she was.

Counsel may have helped Emma; however, unfortunately for her, people who might help her, with the exception of Mr. Knightley, were not readily available. There were people, to be sure, but not those who could see faults in Emma, or who were willing to tell her of them. There are but two people in the novel who see Emma at all clearly. They are the hero, Mr. Knightley, and the anti-hero, Frank Churchill. Mr. Knightley attempts to guide Emma; Frank Churchill

ill attempts to use her self-infatuation to further his own ends. A consideration of their roles in the novel is also a consideration of Emma's awakening.

Mr. Knightley assumes a sort of elder statesman role in the Woodhouse household. Jane Austen writes:

> Mr. Knightley, a sensible man about seven or eight-and-thirty, was not only a very old and intimate friend of the family, but particularly connected with it, as the elder brother of Isabella's husband.

And again:

> Mr. Knightley, in fact, was one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them . . ..[1]

Mr. Knightley, as a companion to Mr. Woodhouse talking over agricultural and parish problems, is of little importance either in the story or to our discussion here. His role is that of mentor and reward for Emma.

As mentor for Emma, Mr. Knightley does not actively direct her actions, though he would often wish to. He is rather set up as a symbol of intelligence, a symbol of maturity. We may more easily see the folly of Emma's actions when they are contrasted with the wisdom of his good advice. Knightley constantly attempts to set Emma right; she consistently ignores his counsel. It is only when her blunders become glaringly apparent that she can appreciate Mr. Knightley's wisdom. Then it might be said that she comes over to the side of right reason, and Mr. Knightley assumes the role of reward for the redeemed heroine. Thus is the novel completed in the fusion of sense and the undeluded Miss Woodhouse.

Emma's chief fault, according to her author, is "a disposition to

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1 Jane Austen, Emma, in The Novels of Jane Austen, IV, ed., R.W. Chapman, London, 1926, 9, 11

think a little too well of herself." This overestimate of her own abilities is the cause of her several mistakes. The first of these has to do with her attempt to "improve" Harriet Smith.[2] Harriet is a parlor boarder at a local girls' school, the "natural daughter of somebody."[3] Emma would notice her and make a gentlewoman of her. Mr. Knightley expresses his concern over her plan and mentions the dangers of it to Emma's former governess and friend, Mrs. Weston.[4] It is in this discussion that Mr. Knightley reveals his special interest in Emma. He says, ". . . I have a very sincere interest in Emma . . .. There is an anxiety, a curiosity in what one feels for Emma. I wonder what will become of her."[5] It might be noted here that Mr. Knightley's analysis of the Emma-Harriet relationship, of its dangers, of the little value it can be to Harriet, is quite indicative of his intelligence and insight.

Emma's first acts of benevolence toward Harriet consist of advising her to reject the proposal of a local farmer and of planning a match for Harriet with the local vicar. Mr. Knightley learns of her interference and protests strongly. He suspects Emma's intentions and attempts to squelch her flair for match-making. He tells Emma, "Elton is . . . not at all likely to make an imprudent match . . .. I am convinced that he does not mean to throw himself away."[6] Emma later finds that she should have heeded this advice. She,

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2 Ibid., 23

3 Ibid., 22

4 Ibid., 36-40

5 Ibid., 40

6 Ibid., 66

much to her chagrin, discovers that the attentions which she thought were directed toward Harriet Smith were meant for herself. In reviewing Mr. Elton's actions Emma recalls what Mr. Knightley had said about Mr. Elton's marrying and saw ". . . how much truer a knowledge of his character" Mr. Knightley had had.[7]

Mr. Knightley is the first and only one to suspect the character of Frank Churchill. He mentions his mistrust of Frank to Emma. Emma, however, defends Frank, for she delights in the distinction which a predicted Frank Churchill-Emma Woodhouse match has gained for her among her acquaintances in Highbury.[8]

Mr. Knightley censures Emma for her lack of attention to Jane Fairfax. Emma can see her only as a rival for the attention of the villagers. Her misunderstanding of Jane even goes so far as to suspect Jane of alienating the affections of her friend's husband.

As each of her blunders becomes known to Emma, she recalls that she failed to heed the advice of Mr. Knightley. As each of her new schemes develops, she depends on her own judgment and disregards his. It is not until Harriet Smith, fancying herself in love with Knightley, expresses confidence that he will return her love, that Emma of a sudden realizes her own feelings and sees that she has been developing a rival. Thus Jane Austen writes:

> Now that she was threatened with its loss, Emma had never known how much of her happiness depended on being first with Mr. Knightley, first in interest and affection.[9]

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7 Ibid., 135

8 Ibid., 145-151

9 Ibid., 415

The rectifying of Emma's errors, the dispelling of her illusions, culminate in her marriage to Mr. Knightley. His role as Emma's mentor is justified. His intimacy with the Woodhouse family is sufficiently established that he might be in a position to give Emma advice. He is serious, intelligent, experienced and respected. However, his role as lover at first strikes the reader as rather improbable. We look upon Mr. Knightley more as brother, or father to Emma, than as possible suitor. It is only after his jealousy of Frank Churchill is established, and after we review his feelings toward Frank, that we begin to accept him in this role. Thus we read:

> On his side there had been a long standing jealousy, old as the arrival, or even the expectation of Frank Churchill. He had been in love with Emma, and jealous of Frank Churchill, from about the same period, one sentiment having probably enlightened him as to the other.[10]

Frank Churchill is more of an accomplice of Emma than a foil for Mr. Knightley.[11] There is no direct conflict between the two as there is between Darcy and Wickham. The contrast between Frank and Knightley is the contrast between adolescence and maturity. Frank Churchill is immature, somewhat silly, irresponsible, egotistic, and insensible to the feelings of others, qualities which are not inconsistent with his age and state of life. He has, however, a charm which makes all of the characters, excluding Knightley, blind to his faults, a charm it might be noted, which is similar to Emma's charm, which also causes people to overlook her shortcomings.

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10 Ibid., 432

11 Wright in commenting on Frank Churchill's role says, "It is almost improper to say that Emma contains a villain: Frank Churchill . . . is a villain only by contrast with the excellent Mr. Knightley." (Wright, A Study in Structure, 155)

Upon the death of his mother Frank Churchill was taken into the home of a wealthy aunt and uncle to be brought up as their own child. There he learned the comforts and privileges of wealth; any attachment to his father became subordinate to his own pleasures. His often promised visits were postponed until they were to further his own interests. Having made a secret engagement with Jane Fairfax at Weymouth, he found it desirable to visit his father at Highbury when Jane went there to visit her aunt. It was then that he entered actively into Emma's scheme of things. He had long been thought of by his father as the ideal match for Emma. All Highbury had thought this. Emma delighted in the distinction which this brought. She fancied herself in love with Frank for a time and imagined him irrepressibly drawn to her. That the situation should be such was ideal for Frank's plight. He wished to be near Jane and at the same time keep his attachment a secret. This he could easily do by displaying a preference for Emma. All were easily deceived (except Mr. Knightley) and his secret was kept.

We have mentioned the contrast between Frank Churchill and Mr. Knightley. There is also an important relationship between Frank and Emma. Emma, in her endeavor to satisfy her own vanity, uses people. Frank Churchill does this unfeelingly during his stay in Highbury. He allows his father and stepmother to attribute his visit to a wish to see them. Not merely allows it, he encourages the idea. He callously sports with Jane's feelings by flirting ostentatiously with Emma in Jane's presence. He would have Emma believe that he is in love with her. He spares no one in gratifying his own desires. The main difference between Emma and Frank is that Frank has learned more successfully to use people and that he is not self-deluded as is Emma.

Frank Churchill seems to have sensed this kinship between himself and Emma. He believes that she has seen through him and suspected his relationship with Jane Fairfax and the sham which he has perpetrated during his visit. When he is bidding farewell at the end of the visit, he starts to mention this to Emma, but hesitates. She, completely unaware, as deluded as ever, takes his faltering speech as the beginning of a declaration of love.[12]

After all else has come to light for Emma, she too sees this likeness between herself and Churchill. In the last settling of accounts, after Frank has secured Jane, and Mr. Knightley Emma, Emma can judge how much alike she and Frank had been. She says to him in talking about the visit:

> "I do suspect that in the midst of your perplexities at that time, you had a very great amusement in tricking us all. I am sure you had. I am sure it was a consolation to you."
>
> "Oh no, no, no! how can you suspect me of such a thing? I was the most miserable wretch."
>
> "Not quite so miserable as to be insensible to mirth. I am sure it was a source of high entertainment to you, to feel that you were taking us all in. Perhaps I am the readier to suspect, because, to tell you the truth, I think it might have been some amusement to myself in the same situation. I think there is a little likeness between us."[13]

In Emma Mr. Knightley serves as the mentor of the heroine. While his advice is neither sought nor heeded, it is, nevertheless, always there in an attempt to guide Emma. That the advice is sound she will always admit after her actions contrary to it result in unhappiness and confusion. True, it is the unhappiness and confusion that finally persuade Emma to desist from her follies, but she also acknowledges that heeding Knightley's counsel would have prevented

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12 Austen, Emma, in The Novels, IV, 260, 261

13 Ibid., 478

the sad consequences.

As reward for Emma we might say that Mr. Knightley is much more than she might deserve. However, he loves her, and has shown himself intelligent and mature enough to know what he is doing. In the marriage of Emma and Knightley might also be seen a sort of symbol of her salvation, salvation from her self-delusion, an attainment of a degree of maturity. United to the one who possesses good judgment and intelligence in a high degree, she might be seen as saved from further folly.

Frank Churchill as anti-hero stands in contrast to Mr. Knightley and exhibits a character to an extent parallel to Emma's. He is neither as intelligent, serious, nor mature as Mr. Knightley. He is as dominating, trifling, and irresponsible as Emma. As Emma's apparent suitor he enables her to be further misled. As Emma's apparent suitor he kindles the spark of jealousy which makes Mr. Knightley aware of his own love for Emma.

In Mr. Knightley and Frank Churchill Jane Austen has created two of her better male characters. Each is very real; their actions evolve from the characteristics with which they have been endowed. Neither is forced into the role which he plays; each is allowed to develop naturally. They are not restrained in their development in order to fit the author's scheme.

CHAPTER VII

CAPTAIN WENTWORTH AND WILLIAM ELLIOT

PERSUASION

A refusal to concede to the changes of an altered social order, and the claims of filial piety give rise to the complexities of Persuasion. Within the story of Anne Elliot and Frederick Wentworth questions of a social and a personal nature are considered. The novel must be considered in light of both the social and personal struggles, in order that we might understand its theme and properly outline and evaluate the role of the hero and the anti-hero.

Frequently in the novels of Jane Austen slighting reference is made to people "in trade." The Bennets of Pride and Prejudice were encumbered by relatives "in trade." Harriet Smith's illegitimacy might have been bleached by nobility or wealth, according to Emma Woodhouse, but, alas, her father was "in trade."[1] This cleavage between those of landed property, the gentlemen, and those who made their fortune in commerce continuously shows itself. The rivalry between those who would tenaciously hold to the feudal system, rank, tradition, the distinction of title and family, and the quickly rising middle class was a very real thing in Jane Austen's age. This rivalry is also a very real part of

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1 Jane Austen, Emma, in The Novels, IV, 482

her novels. Not until Persuasion, however, does this great social struggle become the focal point of a Jane Austen novel.

Persuasion, it is true, is the story of Anne Elliot, who is ever in the center of its action. It is written from her point of view. Her constant love for Frederick Wentworth is the impulse which carries it forward. Persuasion, however, is more than the love story of Anne and Captain Wentworth. It is also a picture of the clash between the rear guard of the "feudal remnant . . . and the rising middle class."[2] It is a conflict between Sir Walter Elliot and Mr. Elliot, between Lady Russell and Wentworth, between Mary Musgrove and her husband. A.H.Wright notes this conflict when he says:

> Frederick Wentworth's real rival in Persuasion is not William Walter Elliot but over-conventionality. The heroine never forgets her first love, neither does she abandon hope; the sanguine naval officer is, like Christopher Newman in The American, "a good man wronged," — and as James's hero, the wrongdoers are not so much competitors for the heroine's hand, but adherents to a set of standards which he cannot give subservient allegiance to.[3]

"Over-conventionality" is perhaps a mild term to describe the reason for Sir Walter Elliot and Lady Russell's objection to Captain Wentworth. However, it is the conventions, traditions, class distinctions to which Sir Walter, Lady Russell, and Mary Musgrove so tenaciously hold and the jealousies which the wealth of the new "middle class" inspire, which are the rivals of Frederick Wentworth, and which originally barred his marriage to Anne Elliot.

The military and the clergy were considered respectable professions for the younger sons of nobility and the landed gentry. Membership in those

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2 Mudrick, Irony as Defense and Discovery, 232

3 Wright, A Study in Structure, 169

professions did not in itself rate the cloak of respectability and gentility, however. Connections, family, wealth, and rank were prerequisites to recognition.[4] Thus Captain Wentworth, "a remarkably fine young man, with a great deal of intelligence, spirit and brilliancy,"[5] upon applying for the hand of Sir Walter's daughter, received a very cold negative. It would have been the greatest joy for Anne, but "Sir Walter upon being applied to . . . gave it all the negative of great astonishment, great coldness, great silence, and a proffered resolution of doing nothing for his daughter."[6] Lady Russell, friend and confidante of Anne Elliot, "with more tempered and pardonable pride" saw the match "as a most unfortunate one."[7] Captain Wentworth "had nothing but himself to recommend him, and no hopes of attaining affluence;" he was "without alliance or fortune."

William Walter Elliot, Esq., on the other hand, while lacking fortune, could claim the favor of the master of Kellynch Hall. As heir presumptive of the Kellynch estate, William Elliot was considered the ideal match for Sir Walter's oldest daughter, Elizabeth. Despite the desires and endeavors of

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4 In Persuasion, when it is put forth that Mrs. Croft is the sister of a former local curate, in order to enhance her standing, Sir Walter Elliot says, "Wentworth? Oh ay! Mr. Wentworth, the curate of Monkford. You misled me by the term 'gentleman'. I thought you were speaking of some man of property: Mr. Wentworth was nobody, I remember; quite unconnected; nothing to do with the Strafford family. One wonders how the names of many of our nobility become so common." (Jane Austen, Persuasion, in The Novels of Jane Austen, V, ed., R.W.Chapman, London, 1926, 23)

5 Ibid., 26

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

father and daughter, however, William Elliot would do his own choosing. "Instead of pushing his fortune in the line marked out for the heir of the house of Elliot, he had purchased independence by uniting himself to a rich woman of inferior birth."[8]

Thus are the hero and his prospective rival allied with the new in this conflict of the new and the old order. Captain Wentworth lacks wealth and family. William spurns alliance with the baronet's daughter for the immediate advantage of wealth and independence in marriage with a rich woman of no rank.

There are two levels to the novel Persuasion. There is the love story of Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth and the conflict of the social classes. The resolution of the difficulties of the first is the resolution of the difficulties of the other. True sentiment and feeling, true love (in its real sense) rising above the demands of class is the key. Anne Elliot was persuaded to refuse the young, ambitious, but fortuneless Captain Wentworth. In yielding to the persuasion of her father and Lady Russell, Anne was yielding, she thought, to duty.[9] A realization of the persuasion to which Anne succumbed is essential to an understanding of her motives and to the theme of the novel. Wright in this connection speaks of a conflict of two sets of values, those of love and prudence, which are contradictory, and pose a dilemma which is never solved.[10] It should be noted, however, that prudence and love in the strict sense are not contradictory, but compatible, and it is in this sense that Anne

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8 Ibid., 8

9 Ibid., 244

10 Wright, A Study in Structure, 160, 169

Elliot possesses these qualities. Her prudence led to her yielding to what she had seen as her duty. Moved by what we have previously called filial piety, she followed the dictates of her father and the counsels of Lady Russell. Her true love of Frederick Wentworth caused her to persevere; her constancy was rewarded by the return of Wentworth, who, after events overcame his bitterness and reawakened his love for Anne, once again proposed marriage. The events which cause Wentworth's love of Anne to be rekindled are those which reveal her prudence and constancy. The hero's views are modified. His impetuosity and confidence, qualities which were largely responsible for his professional success, made him unable to appreciate Anne's position when she was persuaded to refuse his first proposal of marriage. Although the motives of those who guided Anne were imperfect, Frederick is brought to see that the motives which prompted Anne were laudable.

Captain Wentworth is well equipped for his role. Until he returns to the neighborhood of Kellynch after his successes at sea, we have the author's account for our knowledge of him. In addition to the qualities of wit, intelligence, spirit, attractive appearance, his confidence was such that he could see only wealth and success in his future and hence saw nothing to scruple about in asking Anne to share this future. All these new bourgeois virtues — confidence, aggressiveness, daring, an eye for money — were sure to offend the sensibilities of Anne's family.

It is not until he returns after eight years at sea that we are able to see Wentworth for ourselves. He returns to Kellynch, not to see Anne Elliot, but to see his sister and brother-in-law, who have rented the estate. Having made his fortune, his object is to marry. He has a heart for pleasing any

young woman who may come in his way, excepting Anne Elliot. He finds Anne,

> . . . so altered that he should not have known her again . . .. He had found her wretchedly altered . . .. He had not forgiven Anne Elliot. She had used him ill, deserted and disappointed him; and worse she had shown a feebleness of character in doing so, which his own decided, confident temper could not endure. She had given him up to oblige others. It had been the effect of overpersuasion. It had been weakness and timidity.[11]

However, Frederick Wentworth is to see a modification of his bitterness and his admiration of a determined, resolute character. In the person of Louisa Musgrove he finds such a character. He extols these virtues in Louisa,[12] but when her unyielding nature leads to a near fatal accident[13] we find him wishing "that I had not given way to her at the fatal moment! Had I done as I ought! But so eager and so resolute! Dear, sweet Louisa!"[14]

It is this same accident that opens Anne's character to a new evaluation and appreciation by Wentworth. It is Anne who takes charge of the situation. She keeps her wits about her while the others are either on the verge of hysterics or too numbed by the incident to act. It is she who unselfishly and unceremoniously is willing to stay in a strange place and nurse Louisa. This event awakens Captain Wentworth to a new view of Anne and her situation, this, coupled with the knowledge that Anne's love has been constant, even to the point of refusing the hand of another suitor when hope for Captain Wentworth was lost.[15]

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11 Austen, Persuasion, in The Novels, V, 61

12 Ibid., 87, 88

13 Ibid., 109

14 Ibid., 116

15 Ibid., 88

Jealousy, occasioned by William Elliot's attentions to Anne,[16] and Anne's own declaration to Captain Harville on the constancy of woman's love,[17] cause Captain Wentworth to renew his suit of Anne.

Captain Wentworth is a probable and credible hero. While we are not often allowed to hear him speak, we are given sufficient evidence of his character through the testimony of others and intelligence of his actions. Captain Wentworth is intelligent, clever, witty, confident, aggressive, pleasant, unyielding, liable to jealousy, hurt and bitterness; all these qualities are very real and credible as found in him.

The anti-hero of Persuasion, William Elliot, does not assume his role as anti-hero until midway in the story. It is then that he enters as the rival of Frederick Wentworth for the favor of Anne Elliot. The contrast between the hero and the anti-hero rests in a difference in direction of their energies, and in the lack of principle found in William Elliot. Both are ambitious; both are clever. Each seeks wealth and attains it, though their methods of attaining wealth vary. The hero gains his fortune from the spoils of war; the anti-hero comes by his through false love and trickery. Frederick Wentworth settles down to a quiet, respectable life; William Elliot, permanently branded villain, persists in his ways of seduction and avarice. Not long after his entrance in the novel, William Elliot gains the sympathy of the reader. He enters as the mysterious heir to the Elliot estate, gains stature and agreeableness when he spurns the advances of the vain, hollow Sir Walter Elliot and his insipid, over-

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16 Ibid., 104, 190

17 Ibid., 233-235

bearing daughter, Elizabeth. The only spoken testimony to William's personality at that time we receive from Elizabeth who "found him extremely agreeable" and ". . . had liked the man for himself."[18] The reader's favor is gained by William's actions. In declining any alliance with Elizabeth and in scorning the favor of Sir Walter, William apparently rejects the tenets for which Elizabeth and her father stand, those tenets which a brief acquaintance with Sir Walter and Elizabeth make odious to the reader. Thus, although his appearance is brief in the early stages of the novel, William is temporarily assured of the reader's sympathy.

Having been introduced as the mysterious heir, William rises to the position of prospective rival of Wentworth for Anne's affection. We learn of the death of Mr. Elliot's wife. He is seen at Lyme where he views Anne admiringly. William Elliot's next appearance is at Bath, where he seeks a reconciliation with the Elliots. Anne meets him and finds him agreeable. It is not long before we find Mr. Elliot hinting of a proposal to Anne. "The name of Elliot," said he, "has long had an interesting sound to me. Very long has it possessed a charm over my fancy; and if I dared, I would breathe my wishes that the name might never change."[19] Anne must, in view of the role which Mr. Elliot is to assume, distrust him for his previous disregard for his relations, even though he appears agreeable.

In considering the anti-hero of Mansfield Park we pointed out the mishandling which Henry Crawford received at the hands of his author. William

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18 Ibid., 8

19 Ibid., 188

Elliot is the victim of a somewhat similar fate. He has won the sympathy of the reader and the sympathy of the heroine. It should be noted, however, that the reader's sympathy toward Henry Crawford was based on personal observation of sufficiently long duration, while the sympathy for William stems from one act contrary to the Elliots and his comparably brief appearance at Lyme and Bath. The method of handling the reversal, the revelation of William's true personality, is similarly sudden and contrived.

William Elliot must be put back into his niche; he is to be the rake and trifler. As a result his past is artificially revealed by Anne's old friend, Mrs. Smith.[20] Mr. Elliot has been an opportunist; he has spared no one in his pursuit of wealth and position. He married first for fortune, mistreated his wife, and ruined Mrs. Smith's husband. Lest Sir Walter should remarry, have a male heir, and thus do William out of his baronetcy, William would marry Anne to be able to keep an eye on Sir Walter. Failing in this, Mr. Elliot removes the danger to Sir Walter, the scheming Mrs. Clay, by establishing her as his mistress. Thus:

> The news of his cousin Anne's engagement burst on Mr. Elliot most unexpectedly. It deranged his best plan of domestic happiness, his best hope of keeping Sir Walter single by the watchfulness which a son-in-law's rights would have given. But, though discomfited and disappointed, he could still do something for his own interest and his own enjoyment. He soon quitted Bath; and on Mrs. Clay's quitting it soon afterwards, and being next heard of as established under his protection in London, it was evident how double a game he had been playing, and how determined he was to save himself from being cut out by one artful woman at least.[21]

All of this is rather unreal, to say the least. Mrs. Smith's disclo-

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20 Ibid., 199-211

21 Ibid., 250

sure of Mr. Elliot's past is reminiscent of Colonel Brandon's disclosure of Willoughby's seduction of the Colonel's ward. The unprepared thrusting upon us of the rogue Elliot is similar to Henry Crawford's sudden about-face seduction of Maria Rushworth.

Mr. Elliot is the victim of expediency. His author has wrenched him from the form she has set him in to use him to suit her convenience. The regret is not that William Elliot is a rogue, but rather that he was not drawn to be a rogue, that the evidence of his roguery is neatly compressed in the improbable story of Mrs. Smith which is thrust upon the reader. One would wish to have seen William Elliot once act or think as a rogue.

We have attributed a bi-level construction to Persuasion. There is first the love story of Anne Elliot and Frederick Wentworth, which is complicated by Anne's sense of duty, her respect for the dictates of her father and the counsels of Lady Russell. The aggressive, spirited Frederick is embittered by what he construes to be Anne's unwarranted bowing to the persuasion of her family. He is brought to see the constancy of Anne's love and appreciate the motives which prompted her refusal. The anti-hero, William Elliot, is groomed as probable rival of Wentworth, but is shunted off as rogue, despoiler of woman, and the unscrupulous pursuer of wealth.

On the second level Persuasion is the conflict between the class-conscious, tradition-bound nobility and the rising middle class. The confident, aggressive Wentworth, without family or fortune, is offensive to the house of Elliot, excepting Anne. William Elliot, in pursuit of a more immediate fortune, spurns the Elliots, Sir Walter and Elizabeth, in their effort to consolidate the family wealth and title. Both William and Frederick stand opposite the

Elliots and, in being sympathetic characters, serve to condemn the beliefs of the class-conscious Elliots. William Elliot, however, was motivated by personal gain; he found time to contemplate the advantages of rank and title after he secured wealth enough to satisfy his desires. In the union of Anne and Frederick Wentworth is portrayed a mutual love based on an appreciation of personal qualities and unaffected by considerations of wealth, title, or family.

CHAPTER VIII

THE AUSTENIAN HERO AND ANTI-HERO

After all of Jane Austen's heroes and anti-heroes have passed in review, we are left with the very simple conclusion that the heroes, with the exception of Darcy and Frederick Wentworth, and the anti-heroes are subordinate, functional characters. In stating that the heroes and the anti-heroes are functional, we mean to condemn neither them nor Miss Austen, for in functioning well they play a vital and essential part toward the fulfillment of the author's plan. To put it simply, we can say that we are not so much interested in Henry Tilney or Wickham as personalities, but rather in Henry for the part he plays in the enlightenment of Catherine Morland, and in Wickham for the effect which his actions have in complicating the relationship of Elizabeth and Darcy. Darcy and Wentworth are also subordinate, though in a less degree than the others. Their purpose in the novels depends on more than what they do; what happens to Darcy and Wentworth is of major importance. The structure of Pride and Prejudice is dependent upon Darcy's diminishing prejudice and his growing love of Elizabeth Bennet. Frederick Wentworth's views and personality undergo a modification as the result of a series of incidents in Persuasion. The primary, though not always exclusive, purpose of the heroes and the anti-heroes is that of instruments which effect various actions or are affected in a certain manner for the accomplishment of the aims of the novels.

It is principally through her heroines that Jane Austen gives exposition to the themes of her novels. In Northanger Abbey the narrative is concerned with Catherine Morland's gradual awakening to reality and the refutation of the illusory exaggerated world of Gothic and sentimental fiction. Emma Woodhouse's ascent to maturity and true self-appreciation is the core about which Emma revolves. The discovery of the principle of moderation as the key to happiness is the end which Marianne Dashwood must obtain in Sense and Sensibility. Mansfield Park is concerned with Fanny Price's education in the environment of Mansfield Park and her stand against the forces representing an ignoble set of moral values. In each of these novels the heroine must make a discovery or survive a crisis. In the heroine's discovery or survival the theme is exposed.

Our question here concerns the hero and the anti-hero's relationship with the theme. In varying degrees the hero positively supports the theme by aiding the heroine, while the anti-hero works contrary to the heroine's enlightenment, or as in the case of Fanny Price, the heroine's continuous and final adherence to the principles which she espouses. In Sense and Sensibility Colonel Brandon, the least active of the heroes, a man very sobered by his experiences, serves principally as a contrast to the anti-hero, Willoughby. His active contribution consists of disclosing Willoughby's past. In making this revelation the Colonel provides the turning point of the novel. Edward Ferrars, the co-hero, also presents a marked contrast to Willoughby and in conjunction with Elinor provides a romance which parallels and contrasts with the romance of Marianne and Willoughby. The anti-hero's office is to mislead the heroine. Willoughby's person, his manner, and his activities are all that would appeal

to the sensibilities of Marianne. His unfeeling sporting with her affections culminates in her heartbreak and enlightenment. Henry Tilney, Mr. Knightley, Edmund Bertram, each makes a positive contribution toward his heroine's realization of the end for which her author has planned. Henry and Mr. Knightley attempt to point out to their heroines the pitfalls which confront them; each acts, though not always successfully, as a counselor to the heroine. Edmund Bertram fashioned the native virtue of Fanny Price in the Mansfield Park tradition; Fanny withstood the proposals of Henry Crawford, who represented the ethics of a decadent society. Henry Crawford very evidently stands out as an opposing force to those whom Jane Austen approves in Mansfield Park. Frank Churchill can be considered a kindred spirit to Emma, who encourages her in her erroneous ways by his flattery and attention, and thus is an obstacle to her reaching maturity. John Thorpe is the least believable of the anti-heroes and, in light of our consideration here, contributes little to the novel. He is one of that group who would retard Catherine Morland's progress toward enlightenment by encouraging her continued dalliance with the frivolous and fictitious. Thus, in each of the novels which we have mentioned, the hero actively supports the theme in aiding the heroine in the attainment of the desired end; the anti-hero is an obstacle to this attainment.

Of the four heroes whom we have considered there is a striking likeness in the relationship between Henry Tilney, Mr. Knightley, Edmund Bertram and their respective heroines. Mary Lascelles cites a likeness between the hero-heroine relationship found in Mansfield Park and the hero-heroine relationship found in the sentimental novel. This relationship is one in which the hero is mentor and reward of the heroine. This pattern, which had its source in

Richardson, Miss Lascelles points out, "was followed in A Simple Story, in Evelina, and Camilla and several lesser novels . . . but she develops it afresh, according to her own vision."[1] Not only is this pattern found in Mansfield Park, but also in Northanger Abbey and Emma. Neither Henry Tilney, nor Mr. Knightley was quite as active as Edmund Bertram as guide and counselor of the heroine, but the advice of each was a decisive factor in the actions of the heroine. Their role as suitor was definitely that of reward granted to the enlightened heroine. Neither Henry, nor Mr. Knightley was very active in his pursuit of the heroine; neither realized his love for the heroine until some belated event occurred which awakened him to its presence. In each instance this sudden avowal of love was not adequately prepared for; it served as a handy and tidy conclusion to the novel. One can not help feeling that these men were bestowed upon Catherine and Emma as rewards for their awakening. Each of the heroes represented qualities which the heroine was to attain. Having attained them, the heroines were united to those men who were instruments in leading them to the correct view.

Conspicuously and purposely missing from our discussion thus far have been the novels Pride and Prejudice and Persuasion. A pattern, though not a rigid pattern, can be seen in the other four novels. The relationship between heroine, hero, and anti-hero as found in Pride and Prejudice and Persuasion differs from that which we have noted in the other works. A brief review of the salient features of these works will make this evident.

In our discussion of Pride and Prejudice we noted the striking paral-

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1 Lascelles, Jane Austen and Her Art, 66, 67

lels of characterization and construction. Elizabeth Bennet was prejudiced. Her prejudice stemmed from her pride in her own judgment and a sort of filial pride or loyalty to her family. Darcy was also prejudiced. His prejudice emanated from pride in his judgment and pride of class, a pride which was offended by the vulgarity of the Bennet family. Elizabeth and Darcy were mutually instrumental in bringing about the awakening of each other. The overcoming of their pride and their prejudice, an increasing knowledge of each other, culminated in their mutual love. Thus in Pride and Prejudice, unlike Jane Austen's other novels, both the hero and the heroine had faults to be overcome. The fact that the novel was written from Elizabeth's point of view, however, places the emphasis on her and makes her the principal character in the novel. The anti-hero of the novel, Wickham, is a complicating element. After Elizabeth's first impressions of Darcy have been formed, Wickham is the principal force in setting the intended lovers' paths farther apart. He also serves, unwittingly, in bringing the heroine and the hero together.

The exposition of the theme of Persuasion is achieved in a manner completely different than that of the other novels. There is no modification of the heroine's views to be effected in the novel. Originally Anne Elliot is torn between her love for Frederick Wentworth and duty, or reverence for the dictates of her father and the counsels of Lady Russell. Anne remains steadfast in her love for Frederick and defends at the end of the novel, despite the hardship it entailed, her yielding to persuasion and also the persuasion to which she yielded. It is Frederick whose views are altered. Embittered by Anne's original refusal, he later returns and under changed circumstances observes Anne's admirable qualities. The determination and aggressiveness which

he himself possessed and which he thought desirable, he found to be qualities which, under certain circumstances, needed modification. Awakened to a new appreciation of Anne, Frederick could understand the motives which he had previously called "overpersuasion." William Elliot is a weak anti-hero. As the mysterious heir to the Elliot estate, who refuses alliance with the Elliot family, he acts as additional opposition to Sir Walter Elliot in the class struggle which is portrayed. As a not very active rival of Frederick Wentworth he serves to arouse Frederick's jealousy and thus aids in bringing Anne and Frederick together again.

Considerable warmth has been generated by some critics in their discussions of the characterization of Jane Austen's heroes and anti-heroes. Some are generous in their praise for Miss Austen's genius in depicting character; others state that she lacks the ability to portray human emotions and mental processes.[2] A blanket condemnation or approval of Jane Austen's abilities for character portrayal could not include both John Thorpe and Darcy, or Colonel Brandon and Mr. Knightley, for where Miss Austen fails in delineating some characters, with others she is eminently successful. We must, then, consider these men separately rather than in a group and take into consideration the various factors which affect characterization. We must consider the heroes and anti-heroes in the light of the whole of Jane Austen.

We have said that the heroes and the anti-heroes of the novels are functional. The question, then, is not merely whether these characters are

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2 We have made mention in the Introduction of the conflicting appreciations of Darcy and in our analysis of Mansfield Park of the criticism of the author's mishandling of Henry Crawford.

fully developed, but whether they are developed sufficiently for the author's purpose, for their proper functioning in the novels. Are they pictured in such a manner that their actions are probable and credible; are they consistent; are radical changes prepared for properly? In light of the discussions of the previous chapters, we can apply these criteria to the heroes and the anti-heroes of the novels.

Colonel Brandon, Henry Tilney, Edmund Bertram, and Mr. Knightley were rewards for their enlightened heroines. None of these men is very believable as his heroine's romantic reward. Colonel Brandon is made more ridiculous by his May-January match with Marianne; Henry Tilney's romantic interest in Catherine Morland is certainly contrived; Edmund Bertram goes to Fanny Price by default, the victim of the inevitable design of the novel. Of these four, Mr. Knightley's match with Emma most closely approaches credibility and probability. As mentors of their heroines, however, Henry, Mr. Knightley, and Edmund are very well qualified and readily accepted by the reader. Each is so placed and so developed that he naturally and effectively fits the role. Thus where Jane Austen has failed in preparing some characters for one aspect of their roles, she has been successful in qualifying them for another.

Perhaps the most outstanding deficiencies in character development, principally inconsistency, are noted in Miss Austen's handling of some of her anti-heroes. Mudrick in a footnote comments:

> John Bailey, among others, has observed the fact that ". . . her scoundrels never come alive." . . . But this may be because her direct moral intent compels her to regard Willoughby, Crawford and Mr. Elliot first as scoundrels, not as characters. In an amoral plot like that of

Emma, Frank Churchill comes very much alive.[3]

Henry Crawford is probably the best example of the poorly handled anti-hero. Having been introduced as a trifler, Henry, influenced by the character of Fanny Price, undergoes a change of thought and feeling. The transformation is real and probable; he becomes a very human, living creature. Incidents are abundant which illustrate his character. However, it is as if Henry were growing out of hand. Having created a living character, the author finds him outgrowing the scheme of the novel. Abruptly and inconsistently Henry Crawford is wrenched from his role and returned to the role of scoundrel in order that the plan of the novel might not be upset.

The means which Jane Austen employs to brand Willoughby and William Elliot rogue are artificial; Colonel Brandon and Mrs. Clay's disclosures of the pasts of these two men are certainly calculated. Willoughby, except for one incident at a party where he spurns Marianne Dashwood, never appears other than sympathetically. Even Elinor, who would censure him most strongly, is almost won over by his entreaties. William Elliot, who is introduced as the mysterious heir of the Elliot estate, and who later appears as the potential rival of Frederick Wentworth, is shunted into the role of rogue without adequate preparation.

There is still another consideration in the matter of characterization. As was pointed out in our treatment of Pride and Prejudice, point of view must be taken into account. Each of the heroes and the anti-heroes plays a subordinate role; the point of view from which the stories are most frequently

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3 Mudrick, Irony as Defense and Discovery, 221

narrated is that of the heroine and the author. Therefore the reader's opportunity to observe the hero and anti-hero directly is minimized and the most effective means of character portrayal is lost. While this does not preclude the adequate development of a character, it does limit the extent or quality of development. Thus with a character such as Darcy, who is not only adequately but well drawn, an even fuller development, additional depth of character, is not possible because the reader's observation of the character's feelings, emotional conflicts, and mental processes is restricted. In Pride and Prejudice we see the changes taking place in Elizabeth Bennet; we are told that they happen in Darcy. The reader has sufficient knowledge of Darcy so that the changes are probable, consistent, and believable, but point of view prevents further observation.

If we were to make any general observations about characterization in the novels, the most apt perhaps would be that Jane Austen is given to extremes. She gives us, on the one hand, the intricate, complex Darcy, and on the other, the clod, John Thorpe and the dull, uninteresting Colonel Brandon. In the middle of these extremes is found the contradiction of Henry Crawford whose character is negated by the expediencies of the plot. Any general indictments against Jane Austen's ability for character portrayal would be easily refuted by the many examples of outstanding characters in the Austen novels. It would seem that where faults are found, they can be attributed to a preoccupation with the design and purpose of the particular novel. Henry Crawford is sacrificed in order that the novel's theme might be successfully presented. Tidy and determined conclusions account for Henry Tilney's marriage to Catherine and William Elliot's summary dismissal. Jane Austen's heroes are subordinate not only

to their heroines, but also to the plan of the novels. Rather than the situations being determined by the characters, the characters are, in many instances, fitted to the situations. Where some characters come alive to the detriment of the plan, they are artificially shunted back into the pattern. Henry Crawford and William Elliot are such characters. Others, such as Colonel Brandon and John Thorpe, are purely utilitarian. John's main contribution is his off-stage manipulations which have to do with causing the complications of the novel. The Colonel, who is a very unsympathetic man of sense, does his bit by revealing Willoughby's past. With each of these men utility has been the chief determining factor; character has been secondary.

In commenting on the hero of a novel which her niece was writing Jane Austen says:

> . . . Henry Mellish I am afraid will be too much in the common Novel style —a handsome, amiable, unexceptionable Young Man (such as do not much abound in real life) desperately in love, all in vain.[4]

Sir Walter Scott attributed to Jane Austen:

> . . . the art of copying from nature as she really exists in the common walks of life and presenting to the reader . . . a correct and striking representation of that which is daily taking place around him.[5]

In these two statements we can find Jane Austen's concept of the novel and by extension the Austenian concept of the hero.

Jane Austen's first two novels, in point of conception, Sense and Sensibility and Northanger Abbey, were satirical expositions of the excesses of

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4 Jane Austen, Jane Austen's Letters, ed., R.W.Chapman, Oxford, 1932, 403

5 Scott, "Emma," Quarterly Review

the novel of her predecessors. Sense and Sensibility was a reaction to the excesses of sentimentality and sensibility, and Northanger Abbey an attack aimed at the horrific flights of the Gothic romance. Miss Austen's later novels are examples of the novel as she thought it should be. Her subjects are taken from the world around her; her purpose is to point up the foibles of human nature.[6]

Miss Austen's aim was not to be in "the common novel style," first consciously in Sense and Sensibility and Northanger Abbey, and later in the form of the novel as she conceived it. The heroes must not be, as Henry Mellish, "such as do not abound in real life." Henry Tilney, Mr. Knightley, Edmund Bertram, Frederick Wentworth, and Darcy meet the requirements of this test. Jane Austen's concept of the hero would seem to be a copy of a man, whether he be curate, sailor, or landowner, taken from life as it was known in her circle. (Jane Austen's heroes were types with which she was familiar. The daughter of a clergyman with a brother in the naval service, she moved in a society such as would be found in Highbury, Hertfordshire, or Mansfield Park.)

In order to appreciate fully the hero and the anti-hero in the novels of Jane Austen, we must consider them in relation to the whole of the Austenian novel. We have seen Jane Austen characterized as a satirist, an ironist, the critical commentator on the manners and morals of her society. It is in this respect that the novels of Jane Austen have gained permanence. Rather than presenting merely shallow amusing love tales, she deals with such universal

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6 A.J.Peterman traces in the novels of Jane Austen a growth which begins with a criticism of the novels as written by her predecessors and culminates in Emma in a form which she believed the novel should take, that of the critical novel of manners. (Peterman, Jane Austen and the Critical Novel of Manners)

concepts as maturity, the effects of environment, the dangers of the false and fictitious, constancy, and prudence. Jane Austen has set her narrative considerations of these concepts in a very limited area and has peopled her sets with the unexceptional personalities with which she was familiar. Miss Austen's novels revolve around her heroines. It is in them, and in the events which affect their lives, that her themes are embodied. The hero and the anti-hero of the novels are seen as secondary to the heroine, serving either as an aid to the heroine in achieving the desired mental or emotional development, or as an obstacle complicating the heroine's development. This general view varies as applied to the particular heroes and anti-heroes, as has been pointed out, but primarily each serves positively or negatively in the exposition of the theme.

It has been our purpose to present a criticism of the Austenian heroes and anti-heroes which is both detailed and comprehensive, which considers the individual heroes and anti-heroes and also gives a general treatment of the role of these characters based on the specific analyses. We have been concerned secondarily and briefly with the characterization of these men. While the criticism of Jane Austen's novels has been abundant, that criticism dealing with the heroes and anti-heroes has been inadequate either in that it was too restricted, or, in being comprehensive, did not delve deeply enough. Much of the criticism has been very apt; some has been inaccurate. It was felt that a need for a criticism which would be both general and particular, which arrived at the general view as the result of particular inspections, existed. This thesis is intended to fill that need. We have, in the Introduction, considered the state of existing criticism, noting the principal "schools of thought" regarding Jane Austen's works. The divergent views are divided generally between

those who see Jane Austen as the conscientious, sympathetic critic of mankind seeking the answers to the human riddle, and those who find Miss Austen to be the indifferent, caustic critic who delights only in laughing at the follies of man. A consideration of the influences of Jane Austen's predecessors on her works has been necessary, not so much to determine what she may have borrowed from them, but rather to see in what manner and for what purpose she may have followed her forerunners. Each of these considerations has been necessary to place our criticism in the proper perspective and to relate it to what has been done previously. It is true that each criticism leads to further criticism; no critic can hope to produce a definitive criticism of an author's works. Just as each of Jane Austen's novels is pregnant with matter for thought, so also are her works controversial enough to give rise to abundant and continuing criticism. Those qualities of her novels which have given rise to this continued avid interest in Jane Austen and her works have placed her among the outstanding novelists in the history of the English novel.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Raymond J. Jordan has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Jan. 25, 1957
Date

Martin J. Svaglic
Signature of Adviser